METZEROTT, SHOEMAKER

(Omne vivum ex vivo)

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METZEROTT, SHOEMAKER

"Omne vivum ex vivo."

"What is your creed?"
"Jesus Christ."
"What do you believe about him?"
"What we can. We count any belief in him — the smallest — better than any belief about him — the greatest, — or about anything else."

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DEDICATION.

"Laborare est orare."

TO

The Clergy and the Workingmen of America.

MAY THEY WORK AND PRAY TOGETHER
FOR THE COMING OF THE
KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

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BOOK I.

LOVE.

METZEROTT, SHOEMAKER.

CHAPTER I.

KARL METZEROTT ATTENDS A KAFFEE KLATSCH.

Karl Metzerott, shoemaker, counted himself reasonably well-to-do in the world. It was a favorite saying of his (though he was not greatly given to sayings at any time, his days being so full of doings), that his Socialist opinions were not based upon his own peculiar needs; and that, when the Commune should supervene, as he fervently believed it must some day, he, Karl Metzerott, would be numbered rather among its givers than its receivers.

In truth, he had some reason for self-gratulation. He was young, strong, and able to earn a fair living at his trade; and his wife, — but stop! We have not come to her quite yet.

The shop where he bent over his lapstone for ten hours a day, excluding meal times, was an odd-looking structure, in a poor quarter of a city which we shall call Micklegard; and which, if any one should strive to locate, we warn him that the effort will bring him only confusion of face and dire bewilderment. For its features may be recognized, now here, now there, like those mocking faces that peered at Ritter Huldbrand through the mists of the Enchanted Forest.

The shoemaker's dwelling contained but three rooms. The front, a shingled frame building of one story, presented its pointed gable at the street like a huge caret, denoting that all the sky and stars, perhaps something further, were wanted by those beneath. This was the shop; behind it were the kitchen, looking out upon a small square yard, opening on a not over-clean alley; and a bedroom above, whose front window peered over the gable roof, between the high blank walls of the adjoining houses, while the opposite one kept watch from the rear: and each, in its curtainless bareness, looked equally desolate and unsatisfied.

It was on a cold, dreary November evening that the shoemaker put aside his work somewhat earlier than usual, and, after carefully closing his shutters, stepped through the ever-open door into his little kitchen, which was almost as red-hot as the huge cooking-stove, filled with bituminous coal, that occupied nearly half the tiny apartment. The other half was over-filled by a gigantic four-post bedstead, on which two corpulent feather-beds swelled nearly to the tester, and were overspread by a patchwork quilt, gaudy of hue and startling in design. Fringed dimity curtains hung from the tester, until their snow-white balls caught the reflection from the glowing counterpane, when they were snatched away, as if from the possible soil of contact, and fastened in the middle of each side by an immense yellow rosette. Upon one side of the stove stood an oil-cloth-covered table, which served equally for the preparation and consumption of food; above it, a steep, narrow stair wound upward to the room above; and on the other side of the kitchen, basking in heat which would have consumed a salamander, were a small old-fashioned candle-stand, half hidden by a linen cover, wrought in the old Levitical colors of red and blue, and sustaining a cheap kerosene lamp; a slat rocking-chair, with patchwork cushions, and a tiny old woman bowed over a huge German Bible, bound in parchment, with a tarnished steel clasp and corners, and heavy smooth yellow leaves.

As her son entered, Frau Metzerott lifted her brown, withered face, and fixed her dark eyes and steel-rimmed spectacles upon him.

"You have quitted early this evening," she said, in the *Platt-Deutsch* dialect, which, with the High German of the book on her knee, was her only mode of speech, though she had lived in America for nearly forty years.

He nodded briefly, and then, as if by an afterthought, added, "It is the evening of the Kaffee Klatsch at the Hall, and I will go there for my supper. There is a little concert to-night, and dancing."

"And a few pretty girls, Karlchen?"

He smiled, not ill-pleased, but vouchsafed no further remark as he sprang up the difficult, crooked stairway to his bedroom.

The old woman looked after him with a slow shake of her head. "I wish he would marry one of them," she thought. "There is room for a wife, up yonder, and it is hard doing the work alone. Besides, one cannot live forever, and, when I am gone, who will make his coffee and his apple cakes as he likes them?"

With a sigh, she fell to reading again.

It is quite possible that, on the sailing-vessel where her husband met and won her, and which, to afford him ample time for the operation, was obligingly blown out of her course so as to lengthen the voyage to America some three months or so, Frau Metzerott had her fair share of youthful attractiveness; but this had been swept from her by the scythe of Father Time, and the storm and stress of life had left her no leisure to cultivate the graces of old age. Of actual years she numbered barely sixty, and the dark hair under her quaint black cap showed scarcely a touch of gray; but the skin was as brown and wrinkled as a frost-nipped russet apple; and rheumatism and the wash-tub together had so bowed her once strong, erect figure, that, like the woman in Scripture, she could in no wise lift up herself. She was dressed in a dark blue calico, marked with small, white, crooked lines, a brown gingham apron, and a small gay-colored plaid shawl over her rheumatic shoulders. Her feet were incased in knitted woollen stockings, and black cloth shoes; and her knotted brown fingers showed beneath black cloth mittens.

She did not trouble herself greatly with the preparations for her lonely supper, when her son, in his Sunday coat, had left her for the Hall; a fresh brew of coffee, a slice or two from the rye loaf, and a few potatoes dressed with oil and vinegar, which had stood in her corner cupboard since noon, supplied all her needs.

The dishes were washed, the kitchen tidied, after this frugal meal, and the mother had settled to her knitting, when there came a knock at the shop door. A pleased smile shone upon the old woman's face as she recognized the tap, and hastened to admit the person who had formerly embodied her dreams of a daughter-in-law, who should be the instrument of rest and ease to her old age. But the Anna Rolf who now passed through the dark shop into the glowing kitchen, had been for two years a comely young matron; Leppel Rolf, the stalwart young carpenter, having wooed and won her, while Shoemaker Metzerott sat passively under his lapstone. Rumor asserted that the fair Anna had been somewhat piqued by this same passivity; but, however that may be, it was certainly no love-lorn personage who now added the radiance of youth, health, and beauty to the glow of the fire and the yellow light of the kerosene lamp.

Yet Anna was not strictly a beauty, though her vivid coloring, sparkling eyes, and overflowing vitality had gained her that reputation. She was simply a tall, well-made woman, with an abundance of silky black hair, a rich, dark complexion, and features which, like her figure, seemed likely to be sharpened, rather than filled out, by advancing years. She was dressed with a good deal of taste, in a new, black silk, with a bunch of crimson roses in her bosom; and her greeting was interfused by the consciousness of such array.

"So you are not at the Kaffee-Visite, Frau Metzerott?" she asked, laughing a good deal. Laughing was very becoming to Anna; she had such charming dimples, and strong, white, even teeth.

"Kaffee-Visite, indeed!" grumbled the old woman, taking, with her withered hand to her wrinkled brow, a leisurely survey of her radiant visitant. "What should an old woman like me do there? I drink my coffee at home, and am thankful. But, *Du lieber Himmel!* how fine you are, Anna! A new silk dress?"

"Of course," said Anna proudly, "and all my own doing, too. Not a penny of Leppel's money in it, from the neck to the hem. My earning and my making, Frau Metzerott."

"*Ach, Herr Gott!*" sighed the old woman, smoothing down the rich folds, half enviously, not for herself, but for her son, whose wife might have worn them; "but what a clever child you are, Aenchen."

"You see," said Anna, "it was this way. You remember when I was first married we lived at his home, and when I had swept and dusted a bit, there was no more to be done, for Frau Rolf lets no one help with the cooking. I don't believe she would trust an angel from heaven to work down a loaf of Pumpernickel for her." She laughed again, and Frau Metzerott added a shrill cackle as her own contribution

"So, as twirling my thumbs never agreed with me," continued Anna, "I just apprenticed myself to a dressmaker; for it is well to have two strings to one's bow, and Leppel's life is no surer than any other man's."

"But, Anna — ?"

"Yes, I know, Mütterchen. It was a special arrangement, of course, not a regular apprenticeship. I was to give so many hours a day to work I already knew how to do, such as running up seams and working buttonholes; and she was to teach me to cut and fit. She knew me, you see, and wasn't afraid of losing by the bargain."

"I should think not!" said Frau Metzerott admiringly. She had heard the story at least a dozen times, and never failed to adorn the right point with the proper ejaculation.

"Well, then," continued Anna, "what should happen but little Fritz came to town, and any one but me would have had enough to do at home; but I *never* give up!" — she drew herself up proudly — "and so, since I finished my course, I have earned enough money to buy this dress."

"And yet you do so much besides," said Frau Metzerott.

"Since his father and mother went to live with their son in the West," said Anna, "I do all my own work, make my own clothes and Fritz's, and take in sewing besides."

"What a girl you are!" sighed the old woman. "But why are you home so early from the Hall to-night?"

"Leppel is gone to New York on business. There is some new machine he wants to look at. I wish he would let them all alone, and attend to his day's work. I did not bargain to marry an inventor," said Anna discontentedly.

"It is expensive going to New York," said the old woman, shaking her head.

"It is expensive inventing," said the young one, her brilliant face darkened by a shadow of real anxiety. "But, however, he must have his own way, and the money is his.

So he was off from the Hall, when he had had his supper, and of course," with a conscious laugh — "he would not leave me there without him."

"No, no," said the Frau, her withered lips expanding into a toothless smile, "you are much too pretty for that, Aenchen."

"The new pastor was there," said Anna, when she had playfully shaken the old woman by her bowed shoulders, in acknowledgment of this remark, "and, I think, the Frau Pastorin that will be."

"So ?" exclaimed the old woman eagerly ; "who is she, Anna ?"

"She came over on the same steamer as the Herr Pastor, and her name is Dorothea Weglein. It seems she had a sweetheart here in Micklegard, and came over to be married to him ; but when she arrived he had died in the mean time, of something or other, very sudden, I don't know what."

"Poor child ! And the Herr Pastor is courting her ?"

Anna shrugged her shoulders. "It looks like it," she said. "It seems she got a service place after her *Schatz* died. The Herr Pastor could do better than that. But some one else was taken with her baby face and frightened ways, Frau Metzerott. Your son was eating her up with his eyes when I came away."

"Did her *Schatz* leave any money behind him ?" asked the Frau.

Anna laughed a little shrilly, as she moved towards the door. "You know they weren't married, Mütterchen ; so, if he did, it probably went to his relations. Well, it is two years since it happened ; she will be easily consoled. Good-night, Fritz will be wanting me. I only ran over to tell you the news," and she was gone, leaving the shop and kitchen darker and stiller than ever, by contrast.

Karl Metzerott, meanwhile, had walked briskly enough to meet his fate, but with small thought of new Herr Pastors or possible Frau Pastorins. He was his mother's own son in appearance, every one had said, when both were younger; at present, the resemblance was less striking. Karl was a man of nearly thirty, who looked older than his years; of average height, strongly and squarely made, the shoulders slightly rounded by his occupation, the head a little large, with a fine, square brow, and a thick covering of coarse black hair. The eyes were keen and clear, the features strong and rugged. The skin was dark, not particularly fine, but clear and healthful; he wore neither beard nor mustache, and his manner showed no slightest consciousness of himself or his Sunday clothes.

But it is best that we should precede him, rapid as are his steps, and gain some knowledge of the scene whither he is bound. The Maennerchor of Micklegard held its collective head rather higher than any similar association in the city. In its own opinion, its members, or the majority of them, were more aristocratic, its club-house better fitted up, its auditorium larger, and its inventive genius greater, than those of any contemporary. Nor shall I attempt to disprove this innocently vain assumption on the part of the Maennerchor, though vanity, whether innocent or the reverse, is said by some to be a part of the German national character. Others doubt whether such a thing exists as a national type of character. My own individual opinion is that, so far as it *does* exist, the Germans are no vainer, *au fond*, than any other people; but that what vanity they possess is of a surface, childlike type, more quickly recognized, but rather less offensive, than the vanity of, say, an Englishman.

But to return to the Maennerchor.

The managers had, of late, at the instigation of the

Ladies' Chorus, issued invitations to a Kaffee-Visite, as it was officially termed; familiarly known as a "Kaffee Klatsch," or Coffee Scandal. The ladies were to meet at three o'clock, said the program (and we assure our readers that we translate from a veritable document), in the club-house parlor; from three to five was to be theirs alone.

"Needle-work, Gossip, Stocking-knitting," said the program, with a shriek of triumph. At five was to be served the "Ladies' Coffee;" from 6.30 to 8.30, "Supper for Gentlemen;" and this exceedingly unsociable arrangement having been carried to its lame and impotent conclusion, the concert, or *Abendunterhaltung*, would begin at nine, under the auspices of the Ladies' Chorus.

In its primary aspect, the Kaffee-Visite was emphatically what is jocularly known as a "Dutch treat." The refreshments were in charge of two or more ladies, in rotation, called the *Committee*, who undertook all the expense and took charge of the modest receipts, fifteen cents being the charge for each person's supper. The receipts and expenses usually balanced with tolerable evenness, the gains of the *Committee* never amounting to a sum which compensated for their trouble, while anxiety of mind lest the incomings should not equal the outlay was written on their foreheads during the early part of the evening.

When Karl Metzerott arrived on the occasion we have selected for description, the "Ladies' Coffee" was over, and the little parlor was full of uproarious *Herren*, the ladies having repaired to the Hall upstairs. All parties were full of true German enjoyment, heightened by the independence and freedom from sense of obligation only possible at a real "Dutch treat." Everybody was host, everybody was guest; the *Committee* waited on the tables, and passed small jokes, with the coffee and cold tongue, and the *convives* roared with laughter as they disposed of the viands with a business-like rapidity, which, in part, accounted for the smallness of the profits.

Strains of music had already begun to resound from the Hall, as Metzerott finished his repast.

"The girls are enjoying themselves," he said, smiling, to his neighbor, who happened to be Leppel Rolf; but an obese little man opposite called out,—

"Enjoying? But how can they, with no partners to whirl them around? When I was your age, Karl, would I have been so lazy? No, my arm would have been round the prettiest waist in the lot long ago. Hurry, lazy fellow!"

There was a roar from the tableful at this sally, for the speaker was well known as the shyest of men where "ladies" were in question. It was even asserted that he had never found courage to ask the decisive question of his wife, but that the marriage had been arranged by his mother.

"If there are no partners at all up yonder," replied Metzerott, "there is no need to hurry. They'll wait till I come."

His voice was a deep bass, rich and mellow; his enunciation slow but distinct, his pronunciation and accent those of the public schools, aided by care and thought at home. A shrill falsetto voice followed his reply with:—

"*Vanitas vanitatum* If you have so much vanity, Herr Metzerott, I must make you a pastoral visit."

Karl turned, and leisurely surveyed the speaker. The remark struck him as in a degree personal, from one whom he had met for the first time half an hour before. The Rev. Otto Schaefer, however, as he stood under the full light of the parlor chandelier, seemed rather to court than to avoid scrutiny. He was a man who could be best described by the one word, insignificant. His height was five feet one, his proportions thin to meagreness, his hair and beard of scant quantity, and not even so red as they might have been; his voice thin and unmusical. He had been in America only two years, in Micklegard not a fortnight; had recently lost his wife, and was said to be looking out for another, in which search, though the possessor of six small children and a limited income, there was no doubt he would very soon be successful.

"But you know I'm a free-thinker," said Metzerott.

The Rev. Otto laughed. "I'll soon cure you of that," he said. "*I* have studied nothing else but the Bible all my life, and *I* believe in it, so why can't you?"

"Because I *have* studied other things," replied Karl dryly, whereupon he was dragged away by Rolf and the obese little man, both crying, "No theology, no religion to-night; let us dance."

Their progress towards the Hall being somewhat retarded by Karl's playful resistance, they found, upon reaching it, that the Herr Pastor had preceded them, and was making a sort of triumphal progress up through its very fair proportions; shaking hands right and left with the lambs of his flock. At the end of the Hall, close by the stage, stood the piano, where the wife of the obese little man was rattling off a waltz with considerable spirit. The floor was full of whirling *Tänzerinen*, here and there embraced by a *Tänzer*. Metzerott, who was really, like all Germans, fond of dancing, made his way to a group near the piano, among whom Anna Rolf's tall form was conspicuous.

"Dance!" she cried, in answer to his request, "why, of course I will; I'd dance with the Wild Huntsman if he were here to ask me."

"I've heard of him," said Karl. "My mother believes in him as she does in" —

He hesitated, and Anna playfully held up her finger. "No wicked speeches," she said; "your mother is a good woman, much better than you."

"Oh! she's good enough," the man said carelessly. "I don't see what that has to do with it, though; any one can be good who tries."

"Then I'm not any one," said Anna; "for I never was good in my life, and I'm sure I've tried."

"Leppel thinks you are good, — the best of wives," said Karl, with an indulgent smile.

"Oh! I'm good to *him*," replied Anna, "and so I ought, for he is the best of husbands; then I am clever, industrious, economical, and good-tempered, I know very well; but I'm not religious, though I should like to be."

"Religion is all nonsense, and the religious man" — and here he was suddenly struck dumb.

"Ah! you dare not speak slanders against religion, so near the Herr Pastor," said Anna, looking up into his face with amused curiosity, as they whirled away again, Karl waltzing on mechanically, because in his confused state of mind it was easier to do so than to stop. "That girl in gray is the one they say he will marry. Eh? you are dancing horribly, Karl;" as they collided violently with another couple. "Suppose we stop."

She dropped into the nearest chair, and fanned herself briskly with her handkerchief, while her partner stood aside, and mentally regained his feet, after the shock that had overthrown him. Yet what was it after all? Had he lived to his present age without seriously loving; pleased here or there, it might be, by a voice or a face, which he forgot the next moment, to be thus vanquished in the twinkling of an eye? It was impossible! Why, he could not even recall, now that she was beyond his immediate vision, a single feature; only a cloud of golden curls on a low, childlike brow, and a soft gray tint surrounding her that might have been an angel's robe, he thought, if there were angels.

Poor Karl! and above all poor Dora! For the gray frock had been pinched and saved for as a wedding dress, if the young man whom she had crossed the ocean to find had but lived to welcome her. Anna had guessed aright, that his savings had gone to his relations; and Dora, in the midst of her grief and bewilderment, had been forced to look out for some way of supporting herself. For two years she had been nursery governess to two riotous boys, who adored and tyrannized over her; and under whose vigorous kicks and caresses her nature had slowly recovered from the shock it had received. Yet she had with difficulty persuaded herself to accept an invitation to accompany the wife of the obese little man to the Kaffee-Klatsch this afternoon; but, that difficulty having been surmounted, wearing her wedding dress followed as a thing of course. It cost her a pang, no doubt, but she had nothing else.

Just how the rest of the evening passed, Karl Metzerott could never after give a coherent account, even to himself. Somehow, somewhere, he was introduced to Dora; he sat near her during the concert, silent, and apparently not looking at her, yet he knew her features well by that time, and could almost have specified the number of her eyelashes.

Then he took her home, actually superseding the Herr Pastor in so doing. They talked but little on the way; when they had nearly reached her home, Karl said, —

"You are not betrothed to the Herr Pastor, Fräulein Dora?"

"No, indeed, he has never asked me," she replied, laughing and blushing a little, but looking up into his face with childlike, innocent directness. Perhaps little Dora was scarcely the beauty that Karl fancied her; Anna's description, "a baby face, and frightened ways," was much more accurate than any he could have given. But her large, blue eyes, with their long, golden lashes, were really beautiful; and nothing could have so moved the man beside her as the sight of that shy timidity, changed into calm reliance on his strength.

"But you would not marry him, *nicht wahr?* He is poor, he is a fool, and he has six children."

"And he is very ugly," said naughty Dora, deserting, without a pang, her oldest friend in America.

"He is very ugly indeed," said Karl Metzerott, in a tone of deep conviction; "God be thanked therefor."

And Dora, though she laughed and blushed still deeper, found it most convenient not to inquire his exact meaning.

CHAPTER II.

THE PASTOR'S BLUE APRON.

PASTOR SCHAEFER was in serious trouble. It was the 22d of December, and his Christmas sermon was still unprepared: worse still, it stood every possible chance of remaining so; for how on earth was a man to consider texts, headings, arguments, or perorations, who had a house and six small children to care for, and a housekeeper whose brother had just been inconsiderate enough to die? In truth, however, it was rather the housekeeper who should be blamed for want of consideration, since the brother would very likely have remained alive if he had been consulted about the matter; whereas Mary, the housekeeper, could certainly have restrained her grief sufficiently to take the sausages off the fire!

It was early that same morning that it had all happened, though the brother had been in a dying condition for several weeks, ever since he had fallen from a ladder during the operation of hod-carrying, and fractured his skull. Therefore Mary's mind had certainly had time to prepare itself for the shock; indeed the pastor's children had become so accustomed to hearing her shriek wildly every time there came a knock at the door, under the supposition that the knocker brought news of her brother's death, that, when this event really happened, little Bruno, the third from youngest, said solemnly, "Poor Mary's brother is dead again;" but nobody supposed it was actually so.

"You had better hold still, and have your hair brushed," said Christina a little sharply. Poor Tina was only nine years old, yet felt herself, as the eldest, responsible for the family; and the responsibility was apt to re-act on her temper. So they all hurried to finish dressing (for the odors of breakfast were unusually strong), and descended in procession to the kitchen, Tina first, leading Heinz, who was two and a half, and apt, when left to himself, to make only one step, and that head first, from bedroom to kitchen. He had fallen downstairs and landed on his head so often, that Tina said she did not believe he minded it at all. Next to him came Bruno, with Gretchen, who was six, and a person to whom nothing, good or bad, ever happened; then Franz, who was eight, and very useful in splitting wood, clearing away snow, and running errands; and then the father, carrying Lena, the six-months-old baby, at whose birth their mother had died.

"Poor Mary!" said Heinz.

The procession abruptly halted.

The children's tongues had been running so fast about the nearness of Christmas, and what gifts the Christ-child might be expected to deposit in their shoes, that no one heard a sound from the kitchen until they had almost reached the lowest step.

"Tina, but why do you stop there?" cried the pastor, who at the turn, with the baby in his arms, could see nothing of what was happening below. "Go ahead!" he added in English, being very anxious that his children should acquire the language of their adopted country.

They were good children, and did their best to obey. Heinz made a flying leap down two steps, and, being withheld by Tina's grasp upon his petticoats from landing on his head, brought some other portion of his anatomy, less toughened by hard knocks, in contact with the steps, whereupon he howled like the last of the Wampanoags.

Tina, from the violence of the exertion, fell back upon Bruno and Gretchen, and Franz made two long steps over everybody's head, and landed first of all in the kitchen.

"*Donnerwetter!*" said the pastor under his breath, but from the bottom of his heart.

There sat Mary on the floor, her apron over her head, howling like a legion of wolves; Heinz was singing the tenor of the same song, the baby added a soprano, Tina rubbed her back, and Bruno, with doubled fists, attacked Franz, who, he averred, had kicked him on the head in passing. Gretchen alone retained sufficient equanimity to realize the full situation.

"Oh, Tina!" she cried, "the coffee is all boiled over, and the sausages burnt to nothing at all."

"When your mother died," said the pastor solemnly, after they had eaten such breakfast as was possible under the circumstances, "when your dear mother died, children, *I* had no time to sit and weep. And I was able to do all that I had to do; but Mary, it seems, was not able even to move back the sausages. Come, let us wash the dishes."

Matters did not improve as the day went on. There never were better children than Heinz and Bruno; but when one had upset the dishwater, and the other fallen against the stove, in their eagerness to be of use, and they had consequently been turned adrift on the wide world, pray, could they be expected to be as quiet as mice? It was quite natural they should find their way to the pastor's study, where there was an excellent fire; natural, too, that the thought of tidying the room, as an atonement for their presence there and previous misadventures, should occur to them; and most natural of all that they should upset the lamp over a valuable book, which had been a college prize of their father's.

Then it was certainly not the baby's fault if she had a tooth nearly through, and was cross about it; nor Tina's if she was too small to handle the tea-kettle dexterously, and so poured the boiling water over her foot, instead of into the basin; but when the kitchen door was opened by Frau Kellar, the wife of the obese little man, and her niece, this was the situation. Heinz and Bruno were seated in different corners of the room, with orders not to move hand or foot until permitted; Christina, in a third, was contemplating her injured member, bandaged, and supported on a pillow; Gretchen, to whom nothing ever happened, rocked the baby in the middle of the floor; and the pastor, with his coat off, and a blue check apron tied around his waist, was bending over the stove, frying cabbage.

"You poor fellow!" said Frau Kellar, "though begging your pardon for the word, Herr Pastor. *Gott!* but you must have the patience of Job!"

"Oh, no," said the pastor. "They are good children, all. It is not their fault if they are young and little; but of course it is hard for a man," he added wearily.

"I should say so!" cried Frau Kellar; "but now here is my niece Lottie, who will stay to-day, and to-morrow for that matter, and help you."

"She is very good," said the pastor, looking up admiringly at Lottie, a tall, florid, good-natured-looking girl, who had already caught up the baby, and hushed its wailing on her substantial shoulder.

"Let Gretchen and the boys go and play with my children," said Frau Kellar. "Lottie can look after these two, and see to your dinner, and you come into your study with me. There is something I must say to you."

The pastor meekly obeyed. He was tired out, poor man, mind and body, and disinclined to assert himself; yet he was scarcely prepared for the decided tone of Frau Kellar's first remark.

"You need a wife, Herr Pastor; you must marry. This state of affairs cannot go on."

"But I wish to marry," said the pastor seriously.

Frau Kellar hesitated a moment; there are limits to every woman's frankness, thank Heaven! especially when she is talking to her pastor. Then she said, —

"Of course you know that Karl Metzerott and Dora Weglein are betrothed?"

The pastor, still in his blue apron, sat somewhat uneasily upon a chair much too high for his short legs. A sufficiently grotesque figure, one would have said, even if his hair had not been so very rumpled, and the hands upon his thin, aproned knees so very grimy; yet, as he straightened his meagre figure and looked Frau Kellar full in the face, there was an unselfish distress upon his ugly little face that dignified his whole personality.

"That man!" he said, "that infidel, that free-thinker!"

"Well, one knew it was sure to happen," replied Frau Kellar, with a shrug of her ample shoulders; "he has been her shadow ever since the Kaffee-Visite."

"I tried to hinder it," said the pastor boldly. "Fräulein Dora is good and pious, and she has no right to marry an atheist. But she only grew angry with me," he added sadly.

"Of course," answered Frau Kellar with a laugh, "folks who meddle with mating birds must expect a peck or two. Well, I have no fault to find with Karl, for my part. He is as steady as a rock, and if he chooses to think for himself, it's no more than every one does nowadays. After all, too little religion is better than too much beer," she added sagely.

The pastor shook his head. "That may follow," he said.

"Hardly," she replied; then, with an access of boldness, "but if she had listened to my advice, Herr Pastor, she would have taken you."

The pastor did not resent her freedom of speech. "She is very beautiful," he said sadly, "and who would marry a man with six children, if she could do better?"

Frau Kellar regarded the figure before her with some inward amusement, as she mentally contrasted Dora's two suitors. "I wonder," she thought, "if he really considers the six children his only drawback." Then she said aloud, "If you really wish to know, Herr Pastor, I will tell you. My niece Lottie in there would marry you to-morrow if you asked her."

"Your niece Lottie?" he said slowly.

"Yes, indeed. And Lottie is a good girl, a very good girl, Herr Pastor; not so young as she has been, perhaps, but you were not born yesterday yourself."

"No," he said, "certainly I was not born yesterday."

"And she would be all the better wife and mother for her thirty years," continued the match-maker, recklessly subtracting several units from Lottie's actual attainments. "She is a good worker, too, an excellent cook, and the temper of an angel. And, best of all, Herr Pastor, she has a nice little sum in bank, saved out of her wages. No one knows it, or she'd have offers enough; but Lottie is sharp; she won't waste her money on any idle good-for-naught. No; but she is tired of living out, and wants a home of her own, and she'd like well enough to be a pastor's lady. That, you know, gives one a good position."

"So it does," said the pastor absently.

"Well, think it over," said Frau Kellar, rising, "and if it suits you, mention it to Lottie. She'll stay with you to-day, and you can see what she is for yourself."

The pastor sat still for a long while after Frau Kellar had left him with his hands upon his knees, gazing into the fire. Presently a tear trickled down his cheek, then another and another. The pastor was weeping the death of his first and only love: for his first marriage had been as business-like a contract as the present proposed arrangement; and his feeling for Dora had been his one romance. But, after all, one cannot live on romance; especially one plus six children, and minus either a wife or a housekeeper. Romance will not mend the broken head or heal the scalded foot: it will not light the kitchen fire or keep the sausages from burning. The pastor might shed a tear or so over his lost golden-haired darling; but business is business, and when the door at last was gently opened, he knew quite well that the buxom figure and smiling face in the doorway were the face and form of his future wife.

"Dinner is ready, Herr Pastor."

The pastor rose and untied his blue apron.

"Fräulein Lottie," he said, "this apron belonged to my former wife. I shall not need it, if you are good enough to stay with me: could you, perhaps, make use of it?"

It was the freedom of the city, the investiture with the best robe, the sending of the pallium, the throwing of the handkerchief; and, as she promptly and proudly tied it on, Lottie took seizin of the pastor, his house and children, and all that he had.

CHAPTER III.

A PESSIMIST.

That same afternoon the Reverend Otto paid a pastoral visit to Dorothea Weglein, the lamb who was about to give herself over to the jaws of an infidel and socialistic wolf. His own fate was sealed, as he knew very well; the stalwart Lottie already comported herself with the dignity of a Frau Pastorin; but a certain latent chivalry in the heart of the little man had been developed by his love for Dora, certainly the purest and most unselfish feeling he had ever known; and he would have perilled his dearest possession, his children or his vanity, to avert the fate that was coming upon her.

His way lay from the German quarter of the city, through its business centre, to the region where dwelt the privileged few, where clustered the stately homes of the wealthy manufacturers, for whose sake Micklegard and the world are permitted to exist by an all-wise Providence. Nevertheless, this German quarter deserves more than a passing mention.

It had been originally a distinct settlement, and had only lately been incorporated in the city. There were; as we already know, old people living there who were as ignorant of English as on the day they first trod the shore of America. Indeed they had no especial use for English, since around them were German shopkeepers of all descriptions, as well as German doctors and apothecaries. Over the shop doors stood German signs, German tones resounded on all sides;

even the houses, though the ear-marks of America were upon them, had evidently been erected by Germans, and were, for the most part, surrounded by tiny gardens, whose overwhelming luxuriance betokened German thrift upon American soil.

The residence of Mrs. Randolph, Dora's employer, was at quite the opposite end of the town; the North End, where are the seats of the gods and the horn of plenty. It was a large, square mansion, built of brownstone, and surrounded by a spacious lawn, that sloped down to the river, blackly and barely enough at this Christmas season, but no more uselessly than in summer, when its closely mown turf, too precious to be walked on, might, perhaps, have soothed a tired eye, but otherwise benefited neither man nor beast.

The pastor rang at the side door, and was admitted into a small square hall, luxuriously furnished. A divan ran along two sides, gorgeous tiger-skins lay upon the tiled floor; here and there stood ottomans and lounging-chairs; the walls were decorated with Japanese pottery, pipes of all nations, and swords of not a few; opposite the door a wood fire burned under an elaborately carved mantel-shelf, upon which leaned negligently a tall, finely proportioned man of about thirty, his fair, composed, and slightly sarcastic face distinctly reflected in the mirror above, as he gazed down into the fire.

As he saw the pastor standing, somewhat aimlessly, where he had been left by the servant, this young man took his elbow off the mantel, and advanced a step.

"I have really no right to ask you to sit down in this house," he said, with a smile that he could not make unkindly, "but if you will do so, I do not suppose any one will object."

"Perhaps," said the pastor, slightly bewildered by this mode of address, and not quite sure that he had fully understood his interlocutor. He sank vaguely into the nearest chair, and gazed around him so helplessly that his companion, partly from pity and partly from a certain nervousness which he would by no means have acknowledged, was impelled to continue the conversation.

"You are a German, and a minister, *nicht wahr?*" he said, in the other's native language.

"*Ja, gewiss!*" said the pastor delightedly. "I am the Pastor of St. Peter's Lutheran Church."

"So? And you find the sheep of your pasture obey your words? or is the crook sometimes needful to coerce them into the right way?"

"They are as good as other people," returned the pastor, relapsing into bewilderment. His questioner shrugged slightly his shapely shoulders, as he turned away to his old position. "You are happy if they are no worse," he said.

At the same moment, he started into sudden vigor and alertness, with a gleam in his eye that told of eagerness for the fray. A heavy silk curtain that hung beside the fireplace was suddenly swept aside, with an angry rattle of rings upon a brass rod, and in the opening appeared a handsome, stately, well-dressed woman, of something more than his own age.

"Dr. Richards, I will speak with you in a moment; I wish I could say that I am glad to see you. Herr Schaefer, you wish to see Fräulein Dora?" Her tone was sharply military rather than rude; but contrasted a little absurdly with the meek obsequiousness of the pastor's reply.

"If you permit me, gracious lady," he said, executing his fifth bow.

"I shall be delighted if you can make her see the error of her present course," said Mrs. Randolph. "You have heard of her betrothal, I suppose? Betrothal, indeed! Upon my word, I think all the girls have gone crazy together!"

The corners of Dr. Richards's mouth twitched amusedly.

"So?" he said, under his breath; but perhaps the lady caught the sound, or saw the movement of his lips in the mirror, for she grew suddenly very red as she motioned the pastor towards the doorway.

"You will find a servant just beyond, who will direct you," she said, "and I hope you will succeed in convincing Fräulein Dora that marriage to one of Karl Metzerott's opinions can bring her nothing but misery. And now, Dr. Richards" —

"If you will pardon the interruption," said that young man easily, "I wish to say that, although quite unacquainted with the peculiar tenets of the person referred to, I am entirely at one with you in believing marriage to one of *any* opinions so exceedingly likely to lead to misery that an opposite result can only be considered a happy accident."

Mrs. Randolph stared into his calm face with angry amazement.

"And you ask my sister to expose herself to such a future?" she said. "I am at a loss to understand you, sir."

"My dear madam, misery is, unfortunately, peculiar to no state of life. I love your sister, and she is good enough to love me. Such being the case, if she prefer misery with me to misery without me, I can only say that I share her taste, and will do my best to make her as little miserable as fate may permit."

"If your efforts prove as weak as your arguments, Dr. Richards, that 'best' will be a very poor one. 'Misery without you!' Why, I will give Alice one year, just one, in America, or six months in Paris, to forget you, and be as happy as a queen."

"I have always heard," said Dr. Richards, coolly, "that good Americans go to Paris when they die, so perhaps you may be right."

"You mean she will never forget you while she lives?" asked the lady scornfully.

"I mean that if you *can* make her forget me, you are quite welcome to try."

"Ah! this is coming to the point, indeed. I am glad to find you so sensible. So you will not oppose her going abroad with us?"

"I shall not oppose anything that Miss Randolph wishes."

The lady frowned, knowing well in what direction those wishes tended; but, before she could answer, the silken curtain was gently moved by the hand of a young girl, whose appearance filled Frederick Richards's blue eyes with the light of anything but misery.

She was about eighteen, of medium height, and slender, with the unconscious grace of a gazelle. Gazelle-like, too, were the large, brown, trustful eyes, her only really beautiful feature, though the brown abundance of her hair, the delicately roseate cheeks and scarlet lips, made her very charming, at least in one pair of eyes. But to us who are present in the spirit, dear reader, at this interview, the most noticeable thing about Alice Randolph is that, despite the shy grace of every movement, and the childlike innocence of the face, we read at once that she will not quail before any pain the future may hold in store for her. Suffer she will; blench or falter, she will not.

She did not speak as she entered the room, but went quietly to Dr. Richards's side, looked for one instant into his face, and laid her hand in his.

Certainly they seemed well matched, for he also was silent as he held fast the hand she had given him. Then his firm lips curved into a triumphant smile. "Well, Mrs. Randolph?" he said.

The lady's face flushed again, rather unbecomingly.

"There is only this to be said," she cried angrily, "Alice, by her father's will, cannot marry without my husband's consent, or she forfeits every penny she has in the world. If you marry a beggar" —

"You forget, my dear madam; at twenty-five she becomes her own mistress."

"Ah? you have read the will? That accounts for your prophecies of misery."

"Wrong, Mrs. Randolph. I have not read your father-in-law's will, though I shall make it a point to do so as soon as possible. I know only what Alice has told me, and hence am well aware that she will lose her fortune in the event of becoming my wife."

"Yet you urge her to do so!"

"You mistake. I leave her to decide for herself."

"Harry would not refuse his consent if it were not for you," interposed Alice. "It is really you who oppose us, Jennie."

"And have I not good cause?" cried Mrs. Randolph. "Would your father himself have consented to your marriage with an infidel, an atheist?"

Alice Randolph grew pale, then flushed deeply as she hesitated to reply, while her sister looked on, in her turn triumphantly.

A sparkle came into the blue eyes of her lover as they searched hers. "That," he said, "is a strong argument, Alice. Weigh it well, and dispose of it once for all. If you marry me, I don't want *that* to contend with. I *am* an atheist, for I *cannot* believe in a God who leaves nine-tenths of his creatures to hopeless suffering."

She gave the other hand to his clasp, and looked up trustfully into his face.

"It is a great mystery," she said, "but I don't think my giving you up would help you to solve it."

"If it can be solved," he answered.

"I have never tried," she said; "my life has been so sheltered, I know almost nothing of the pain that is in the world. But you will tell me, and perhaps we may solve the mystery together."

For all answer he stooped and kissed her.

Mrs. Randolph was furious, — and slightly undignified.

"Very well," she cried, "go to perdition your own way, Alice Randolph. I have tried to be a mother to you, and this is my reward. You will lose not only your money but your soul, by marrying that man."

"Be consoled, my dear madam," returned the young man, sarcastically, "the first will be very useful to you and your children; the second can be of no benefit to any one but the owner. For my part, though I should find it hard to justify myself in holding property under the present régime, I am not exactly a beggar. My practice is a good one, and I can maintain my wife in comfort, if not in luxury."

"And if your health should fail, or you should die?" sneered Mrs. Randolph.

"And if Mr. Randolph's calculations should fail, his workmen strike, and his mill burn down?" he answered coolly. "In the present state of things, Mrs. Randolph, a shade more or less of uncertainty as to the future is of very little moment. It is settled, then, Alice?"

"Yes," she said softly; then her eyes suddenly flashed, her cheeks grew crimson; she turned upon her sister with the air of a lioness defending her young.

"Do you suppose I have not seen," she cried, "how you wish me to marry him while pretending to oppose it? I am ashamed for you, Jennie, ashamed to put your motive into words, because you are my brother's wife. But don't delude yourself with the idea that it is your work; I would have given up the money in any case rather than force him to act against what he believes to be right; and I love him so dearly that I had rather endure misery, cold, and hunger *with* him than to be a queen without him."

Here, woman-like, her vehemence resolved itself into a burst of tears, and, turning, she threw herself into the arms that were open to receive her.

CHAPTER IV.

DREAMS AND DREAMERS.

DORA WEGLEIN belonged to that large class of women in whom the heart is far stronger than the head. Such women feel strongly, but reason weakly; if the feeling be pure and right, their actions are the same; but if selfishness clog the action of the heart, there is no head to appeal to. These are the women who never theorize, or else theorize wide of the mark, and whose husbands often are the happiest, whose children are the best-behaved in the world.

Alice Randolph, on the contrary, was a woman of theory. It was to her impossible to act without a clear knowledge of all the laws that ought to govern such action; hence, as time and tide wait for no man, the opportunity for action often passed while she was weighing pros and cons; and hence, also, she frequently came to doubt the correctness of her own conclusions, when their resulting action had lapsed into the past.

That two women so different, when placed in circumstances almost exactly similar, should choose the same course, is at least noteworthy; indeed Alice found it rather too much noted. She was not aware of any sort of reprehensible pride. It certainly would have mattered little to her if Frederick Richards had been the son of a hangman, to put it as strongly as possible, and she had proved herself not purse-proud; but it was — yes, it *was* — very galling to be always likened and compared to Dorothea Weglein, her sister's German nursery governess. But in truth a woman of theory and one of feeling (or shall I say instinct? It is a good old word, and, while perhaps not strictly scientific, expresses my meaning fairly well) — women of theory and women of instinct, then, are only too apt mutually to look down upon and scorn one another. Dora, however, loved and admired Miss Alice, and was strengthened in allegiance to her lover by the knowledge of her young lady's course.

"It is beautiful that she gives up all her money," she said to Karl, as they walked towards his home on the Sunday afternoon when, as his betrothed, she was in all solemnity to take tea with his mother.

"She may be glad of it some day," he answered grimly. "When the people get their rights, they will have a heavy score to settle with Henry Randolph. He has a heart as hard as his own nails."

"Ach, how terrible!" sighed little Dora. "But the money is good all the same, Karl."

"It is stained with blood," he said. "I am glad you are to touch little more of it."

Whereupon Dora began to cry, as she told him of the check Mr. Randolph had slipped into her hand that morning, and which would be so convenient in buying her wedding outfit.

"And he called me a good girl, Karl, and said you should be a happy man. I think his heart cannot be so very hard. Rich people are sometimes so kind, they cannot be all bad. Must I give him back the money?"

"Keep it, keep it," said Karl gloomily. "You have a right to more than that, you who have slaved for him so long. And, for Heaven's sake, don't cry and spoil your pretty eyes," he added tenderly.

Dora and Alice were married on the same day, though not by design, or even with the knowledge of the latter, who had, to the grief and dismay of the little governess, lately turned a deaf ear to all confidences, and even frowned coldly upon proffered sympathy. Unamiable, very; but Alice had never been particularly amiable. It was a necessity that both, if they married at all, should do so before the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Randolph for New York, whence they were to sail for Europe; and so, one morning, Alice Randolph, quite alone, stepped into the carriage her lover had brought, entered St. Mark's Church a rich woman, and left it without a penny in the world, except what she had in her purse.

"And you are sure you will never repent, Alice, my darling?" asked her husband, when they stood together in the little parlor of the home he had prepared for her. "It was hard for you, dear, with not a sister or a friend to look on at your marriage. Are you quite *sure* you do not regret?"

"What, already?" she answered, laughing. "You might at least give me time. No, sir, I'm not sorry yet, and never expect to be, in spite of your pessimism."

"I hope your optimism may be right, my darling."

"I will *make* it right," she cried defiantly, not of him but fate; "and as for friends, whom do I want but you? Don't you suppose I could have had scores of bridemaids? — girls who would have called you 'too sweet for anything,' and considered it 'so romantic' to have one's only brother" — her eyes filled, but she shook off the tears and went on merrily. "No, sir, I don't repent as yet, and don't mean to; but, if ever I *should*, I am very much afraid that you will be *certain to find it out.*"

Dora's wedding took place that same afternoon, but with scarcely more pomp or circumstance. She had been staying for some days with Frau Kellar, and in the immediate neighborhood of the Herr Pastor, to whom, long ere this, the buxom Lottie had gained a legal title. The pastor's experience in haling into the narrow path this wandering lamb had not been such as to encourage any further effort on her behalf; in fact, the lamb had shown, if not the teeth of a wolf, at least the claws of a cat, and had given her spiritual guide to understand that she was perfectly competent to direct her own goings in the way.

"We love each other, Herr Pastor," she had said, "and the good God would not have put that into our hearts if He had wished us not to marry."

"But the man is an infidel, Fräulein Dora; he does not believe in God."

"That is nothing," answered Dora, smiling. If she had been able to put into words what she meant, it would have been something like this, perhaps, —

"Love is of God, and God is love: Karl loves, therefore he partakes of the being of God; and whether he professes to believe in Him or not is of very little consequence."

But carefully remember, dear reader, I am not justifying little Dora in this conclusion, only stating the argument as she would have done, had her mental powers been cultivated up to syllogisms.

The pastor, however, understood her to mean that belief or unbelief were equally *Nichts*, and went away sorrowful. But Karl Metzerott, when he heard of the conversation, was exceeding wroth, and expressed himself with great force, in a string of German nouns and adjectives, some of which began with "*ver*," while others referred to well-known atmospheric phenomena. No such person, he said, should marry a dog or cat that belonged to him, Karl Metzerott; if Dora objected to a justice of the peace, there was the Calvinist minister, and plenty of Americans in the same business, more was the pity. All ministers were thieves and rogues, anyhow, said Karl Metzerott, living on the charity of their parishioners under pretence of saving their soûls. Souls, indeed!

It was not often that Karl found words for his thoughts to such an extent as this; but gentle little Dora was unmoved by the torrent of eloquence. She would not be married by any one but a minister of God, she said; but that minister need be by no means the Rev. Otto Schaefer. "Though, for her part, and though she had been angry at the time, Dora would always believe that the Herr Pastor was a good little man, and meant well."

"He meant to marry you himself, if you call that meaning well," growled Karl.

And so they were married by the Episcopal clergyman, who in the morning of the same day had united Frederick and Alice; selected by Dora, indeed, for that very reason; a clergyman of the old, indolent sort, now happily almost unknown, who married all that were set before him, pocketed his fee, and asked no questions for conscience' sake. He shall not trouble the reader again, and is of importance here only because, having been Alice's pastor all her life, she was not likely to have been aroused by his walk or conversation to any consciousness of the deep things of the spiritual life.

After the ceremony, the happy pair and their friends, who had witnessed the marriage, partook of a social tea, for which Frau Kellar provided house-room, and the bridegroom paid; then, husband and wife went home to their little three-roomed dwelling, and the new life began.

And then — for a while — how Karl would have laughed at any pessimistic theories. As for Dora, she would not have known a theory of any description, if she had stumbled across one. But she was very, very happy, our little Dora! Life had not been easy to her, — an orphan, maintained and educated by grudging fraternal care, and with her early hope nipped, in its first flower, by the frost of death. Now, surrounded by love, her nature blossomed into a wonderful luxuriance; the wistful blue eyes grew full of laughter, the sad lips smiled, and the cheeks grew rosy. She was as merrily busy all day long as a child at play; and Frau Metzerott the elder found her a daughter beyond her dreams.

Shoemaker Karl said little; but no king upon his throne ever more intensely believed his wife a queen among women. All day he could hear her blithe, sweet voice, singing over her work, or chatting and laughing with his mother, who had suddenly failed, now that she had some one to rest her cares upon. It mattered little, she said; Dora was eyes, hands, and feet to her; she had worked hard enough in her time, now she could rest. And so she lay and rested under her gay, patchwork quilt, upon her testered bed, while Dora bustled cheerfully about the tiny kitchen. In the evening, when work was over, she would often draw the old candle-stand to the bedside, and, with the yellow lamplight shining on her golden hair, read aloud from the heavy yellowed pages of the old German Bible, while Karl sat near with his pipe. Not that he listened, except to the soft murmur of his wife's sweet voice; yet the unheeded words returned to him in after years, stirring always a new throb of misery.

But at the time the Bible-reading served as a not unpleasant accompaniment to his pipe, which he would not for worlds have disturbed or interfered with. "Religion was an excellent thing for women," said Karl Metzerott.

During the following summer occurred the great Sängerfest, the first held by the Sängerbund to which belonged the Micklegard Männerchor. Karl had been married nearly six months at the time, and when we say that in all probability he would not have gone if he could not have taken Dora, we have sufficiently indicated that he was still very much in love with his wife. Fortunately, Laketon, where the Fest was held, is only a short journey by rail from Micklegard, so that travelling expenses were light; and he had cousins in Laketon with whom they could board very reasonably; nevertheless, the sum expended made a hole in Karl's savings-bank account, at which he would have shaken his head dismally a year before.

With the Sängerfest itself we have nothing to do. Of course there were processions, concerts, balls, and all the rest of the routine with which Americans have since become so familiar; but the only noticeable incident for us is that when, as their contribution to the prize singing, the Micklegard Männerchor gave that sweetest of German Volkslieder, "Bei'm Liebchen zu Haus," the audience arose as one man and applauded to the very echo. The prize was theirs; a result to which, in Dora's opinion, Karl's rich bass had not a little contributed.

She was thinking blissfully of this and other matters, in the train that bore her homewards, when her attention was attracted to a conversation going on between two young men who occupied the seat before her. They were students of the Laketon University, though this Dora could not be expected to know; and as one was Irish and the other a German, even more prone than is the case with students in general to discuss all things in heaven above, the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth. They spoke in English or German as suited their subject-matter or the impulse of the moment, and the first words that caught Dora's attention were these: —

"Have I ever objected to Socialism in itself?"

"What do you call its Self? You seem to object to its most necessary elements."

"By no means. I only say that you Socialists are shortsighted, and seem to adopt the very measures best calculated to defeat your own ends."

"Specify, specify!" growled the German.

"With pleasure. The end at which you profess to aim is a universal brotherhood among men, a sort of lion and lamb lying down together all over the world; yet you go to work, with your secret plots and your assassinations, as if you were preparing for another Reign of Terror."

"The Reign of Terror may be necessary *beforehand*."

"Very long beforehand, then. You know the story of the tiger who has once tasted blood. Teaching men to murder makes them murderers; no less. You can't build your social republic out of unsocial Republicans, dear boy."

"Oh! get along with your Irish sophistry! A social republic, as you call it, seems to be, in your eyes, another Donnybrook Fair!"

"Take your time," said the Irishman. "When a fellow falls back on old Donnybrook, I know he's hard pressed for an argument."

"I could prove to you in five minutes that tyrannicide is not murder, any more than tiger-hunting; and" — warned by a twinkle in the blue Irish eye, — "far more righteous than ordinary capital punishment. But, passing that over for the time, I should like to know what means *you* would employ to build a social republic, supposing you wanted one?"

"Do you suppose I should not hail the advent of *true* Socialism as the dawn of new light and life for the world?"

"Eh? a new convert! But stop! there was a qualifying word. *True* Socialism; that is, with all its distinctive features omitted."

"Not at all. Socialism with all its vital organs strengthened and purified; in short — Christianity."

"I thought so! Christianity! Why, Christianity has had her fling for eighteen centuries, and what has she done?"

"The first thing she did was to establish a commune," replied the Irishman. "You can read a full account of it in the Book of Acts, including the history of some weak disciples, who, having perhaps been trained in tiger-hunting, were not fully equal to the occasion during a reign of peace. As the first recorded experiment in Socialism, it ought to interest you."

"But the experiment failed."

"Failed? In the reign of Tiberius, with Nero and Caligula and all those fellows to come after? Well, rather! The world wasn't quite ready for it, not by some eighteen centuries, so Christianity fell back on her intrenchments, as you might say, and, while she reserved the spirit of Socialism, let go the letter."

"She did, did she? why, Christians"

"I'm not talking about Christians. We're a bad lot, most of us, but it's because we don't live up to our principles. You read over your Gospels, old boy, and tell me whether, if they really and vitally influenced the lives of the majority of Americans, Socialism in its essence — that is, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity — would not follow as a matter of course."

"Oh! perhaps, yes. I don't quarrel with your religion as a system of morality, Clare. It is" —

"I know; miracles. But how a fellow who, not content with making bricks without straw, tries to build a house by tearing up the foundations, can quarrel with miracles, passes my comprehension. Look here. Do you not know that it is a waste of time to reform society from the outside, and especially by main force? The worm at the root of the social tree, my dear fellow, is sin. How do you propose to get rid of it?"

"Ah, there indeed," sighed the German, his metaphysical soul rising to the bait, "you start the great religious problem, my friend, with which Zoroaster, Buddha, and other religious teachers have grappled."

"And which only Christ has solved," said Ernest Clare.

Whereupon they rushed into a discussion which, taking by and by another turn, led them into transcendental mathematics, and the possible existence of worlds or universes where a fourth dimension forms part of the usual order of things; with many wild fancies as to the type of inhabitants such universes may possess. When Karl hurried back from the other end of the car to fetch his wife and change cars for Micklegard, they were still hard at it.

That night Dora had a singular dream. She stood in a world which formed part of one of those universes of which Clare and his companion had spoken; a universe which admits a fourth, even perhaps a fifth, dimension, and which must therefore differ so widely from our earth even in the primary elements that compose what here we call land and water, that any attempt to describe it were but as the meaningless babble of an infant.

In the world whereon she stood or floated — for our commonplace to them would be miraculous, while what we call miracle is there a daily happening — there was a stir and moving to and fro, as of leaves swayed by a sudden breeze. One of their number had willed to leave them, and seeking our earth — known to him as the theatre of the wondrous drama of redemption — to don our uniform of flesh and strike one good blow against sin. And this, by a law of his world, was possible to him.

He stood, a tall, radiant figure, before One appointed to hear such requests and decide upon them.

"Have you thought well upon the matter?" it was asked him. "It is nothing that, though you may choose to go or stay, you may by no means choose your post in the battle. No good soldier would grumble at that; nor, to say truth, is the difference between what there they call riches and poverty, high and low, happiness and misery, at all worth considering. But have you thought upon the horribleness, the awful, slimy infectiousness, of the foe you must close with in a death grapple? Have you considered the sinfulness of sin?"

"I have looked upward to the midnight sky," he made answer, "and have beheld the universe that contains earth floating there, a pale, translucent disk. And when the thought of sin had stained its purity with the hue of blood, I have been as one who, bound and helpless, beholds a fiery serpent approaching, to devour before his eyes a sleeping, innocent babe."

"But what," it was urged, "if you should be overcome in the struggle? For the serpent is very strong, and his poison is death."

"The Life of our King," he replied, "is stronger than the death of the serpent."

"But the choice is forever," he was told. "Victor or vanquished, hither you can never return, save as others have done, in passing from world to world. Man you will be, and man you must remain forever. Also, you will forget your world, your friends; and, though broken visions may float about your infancy, like rainbow hues above the dewdrops of morning, they will vanish all too soon before the coming of that sun of earth."

"Morning and evening are alike His handiwork," he replied. "Everywhere and always I shall have Him."

Then He who had questioned him arose solemnly. "Thou bearest with thee the sign of victory," He said. "Go in peace."

And it seemed to Dora as if the tall, radiant form turned upon her, her alone in all that illimitable throng, a face of wondrous and eternal beauty. Close it came, and closer still; now they two were alone in all that measureless universe, and his lips smiled, and the eyes were the eyes of a little child.

"Mother!" he said, and kissed her on the lips; wherewith a strange shuddering thrill of utter bliss shot through every member. She woke to find the daylight streaming in at the curtainless window. Her heart was throbbing heavily, her limbs trembled, and her eyes were full of tears.

CHAPTER V.

"WHEN SORROWS COME."

Do you know, dear reader, how slowly and heavily fall the first drops of a thunder shower? After a little, when the storm is fully upon us, when the wind crashes in the branches of the trees, and sheets of rain beat against the windows, there is but small account made of a single drop; but at first, after a day of sunshine, ah! how large and ominous they seem; and even so is the first coming of trouble.

It was but a few weeks after the end of the Sängerfest that a change in Leppel Rolf which had long been silently operative, began to manifest itself in his outward man. He grew morose in speech and manner, shabby in his clothing, negligent of his daily task, more and more absorbed in his invention, which now neared completion, and as he fondly hoped, success. Meanwhile, the hope brought something far from happiness, whatever might be the case with realization. Anna's color grew hard, her features sharp, her eyes anxious, under the pressure of dread for the future, and the knowledge that Leppel's savings and her own had been exhausted to the last penny, and that all which now stood between them and dire want were her husband's daily wages. And Leppel had been of late more than once sharply reproved by the foreman of the great building firm for which he worked.

Indeed, Anna could not justly blame the foreman. She would have scolded, too, if an employé of hers had been found dreaming over his work, and drawing plans on the smooth pine boards, instead of making them into doors.

"If he had looked at the plans, he would have admired, instead of cursing," growled Leppel.

"Not if they delayed work he had contracted to finish by a certain time," returned Anna shrewdly. "Everything in its own time and place, Leppel; should I get through the work I do, if I did not remember that?"

Anna's practical, clear-seeing spirit did not know the power of an idea stronger than itself; it was no wonder she lacked patience. Meanwhile troubles dropped faster and faster both upon herself and her neighbors.

The old Frau did not wait to receive the little grandson who came when the June roses bloomed over the land, as beautiful and sweet as they. Life and death lay together under the shoemaker's roof; the old life passively drifting out of the world, as the young life struggled into being. It was terrible for Dora, said all the gossips; but, fortunately, Dora was one of those happy persons who take everything quietly, so it seemed to do her no harm. Anna Rolf was at the house day and night, and managed everything, in spite of the fact that her own domestic anxieties were daily on the increase. It was owing to her, she always said afterwards, that little Louis had such splendid health. She "started him right," and the start is just everything to a baby!

There never was such a baby! Of course not. Others might be as pretty, perhaps as bright and knowing, but what baby ever was so good and loving since the world began, or cooed in such varied tones, as sweet as the notes of an angel's harp? There was no doubt about it, he was certainly a remarkable child; and as the young mother lay upon her bed in the hot, close room, or by and by went about her work again in the kitchen beneath, many an old tale returned to her mind that she had heard in her German home, of beings from the upper air, higher intelligences who had come down to teach and bless our sinful earth. Her wonderful dream also returned to her many times, and, bending over the little form, she strove to trace in the unconscious baby features some resemblance to that strange and beautiful face that had looked so lovingly into hers. And at times she quite believed she could; when little Louis' eyes were suddenly opened, and he looked into her face with that strange, grave look, the resemblance was wonderful, thought Dora.

These thoughts she kept to herself; they were sweet and beautiful, but Karl would only have laughed at her for them, willing as he was to agree that such a baby as their boy had seldom, if ever, been seen before.

The grandmother's testered bed was very convenient for Louis to lie upon while Dora was busy. They remembered the old Frau tenderly. "She was a good woman and a hard worker," Karl had said gravely. But she was now reaping the reward of her goodness. Was it possible to wish her back into such a world as this, especially as her funeral expenses and Dora's illness had brought their savings very low indeed?

And trade began to fall off.

Karl Metzerott had a certain reputation in his own quarter of Micklegard for the excellence of his work. His shoes were not fancy shoes, he was wont to say, but he used only the best leather, and they were every stitch hand-made. One pair of them would outlast two pairs of machine-made shoes, he said, and then be half-soled to look as good as new. But there was no denying that the machine-made shoes were cheaper to begin with, whatever they might be in the end; and when business is bad all over the country, money as tight as wax, and the air filled with rumors of a general financial crisis, and complaints of over-production, — whatever that may be, — why, people will wear the cheapest things they can find. Perhaps they reason that the sooner the things wear out the sooner will the demand catch up with the supply, and the evil of over-production be remedied; or perhaps it is simply that if a man have five dollars to buy shoes for his entire family, he must make it go as far as it will, rather than spend it all on one member (or pair of members), letting the rest go barefoot. As to what he shall do when the cheap shoes are gone, why, he must just resort to the expedient of which the rest of us avail ourselves when everything else has proved unsuccessful, — he must trust in Providence.

Whatever the cause, Metzerott saw his best customers pass his door in machine-made shoes; but he did derive a sort of cynical pleasure from noticing how soon the shoes were brought to him to be mended and patched.

"I must work over hours, and lower my prices," he said to Dora; and, though the latter could not quite understand why he must overwork, when rows of unsold shoes stood upon his shelves, she made no objection, as the idea seemed to comfort him.

Lowering the prices, however, had an excellent effect; and though the shoes were sold at little more than cost, it was certainly less depressing than to see them hanging there so helplessly, or staring from the shelves with their toes turned out in the first position, in such an exasperating manner.

Anna Rolf also felt the hard times, even more than the Metzerotts, since "every woman her own dressmaker" is an easier problem to solve than how to make one's own shoes. Leppel had been discharged at last, — got the sack, as he expressed it; not before he had richly earned, as one might candidly admit, all that the sack might contain.

But oh! for the innocent who suffer with the guilty, in this world of ours! There is never a jewelled cup of gold in the mouth of any sack for them.

Leppel's family bade fair to have very little in their own mouths for a while, with the father out of work, and Anna expecting to be again laid aside from hers for a season. "But you have no rent to pay, that is one thing," said Dora comfortingly, "and we will take care of the children, Karl and Louis and I. Do you suppose I can forget how good you were to me?"

Leppel himself could have lived on air, in his present tension of mind and body. His model was at last completed; more, it actually worked. It was indeed a beauteous little machine, and the admiration of the whole quarter; so that, in spite of the hard times, he had been able to borrow five dollars here and ten there, until he had raised enough to pay the necessary fees at the patent-office.

"But if you take my advice," said one of the lenders (the loans were all to be secured by shares in the patent), "you'll get a man I know in Washington to look into it for you. I believe he has that patent-office at his finger-ends, and it's a regular picnic to hear him tell why this model was a failure, and that, not half so good, perhaps, took like hot cakes. Just send your machine to him. It looks to *me* like a pretty good thing, but" —

"I'll *take* it to him," answered Leppel sharply.

He did take it to him.

The man of knowledge inspected it closely, and carefully studied every motion. Then he thoughtfully stroked his beard, which was long and luxuriant (perhaps from excess of knowledge) to the point of aggressiveness.

"Yes," he said slowly. "Yes, yes. Seems pretty clever: ingenious, too; works all right; labor-saving, no doubt of that. Might be a very good thing; but I'm afraid, Mr. Rolf, I'm *afraid* there's no money in it. In fact," for you see the man of knowledge had had other interviews with inventors, and he knew that things must be broken to them gently, "in fact, there's a what-you-call-'em already in the office, enough like yours to be its own brother."

"Impossible! I never heard of it!" stammered the inventor.

"Oh! I don't suppose you did; case of great minds thinking alike, you know. Bless your soul, it happens every day! Not the same *machine*, you know," with an emphasis as if it might possibly have been the same something else; "but like it; just enough like it for yours to be an infringement on the patent, if the patent was worth anything, which it ain't."

"Then my invention is surely not the same," said poor Leppel, in his labored English; for, though he had twice helped to elect a President, he had lived in America only ten years. "Have you not already said it was good and labor-saving?"

"Oh, it's all that," said the man of knowledge easily; "but the fact is, it didn't pay. It was tried, you know. The man who owned it, — not the inventor, who sold it for a song and was happy ever after, as the story-books say, — but the man who bought it — well, he was pretty warm about the pockets, so he did some extensive advertising, and started up his works in fine style; but the machines cost like fun to make, especially at first; if they had *taken*, you know, he could have run things on a bigger scale, and so made 'em cheaper; but they didn't *take*. They save muscle, of course; but you see most of us have muscle, and very few of us money. That's about the English of it, I guess. If they'd saved *time*, now, or money, 'twould have been different."

"What became of him?" asked Leppel gloomily.

"The inventor? don't know; clever fellow, though, ought to succeed at something; maybe not the first thing he tried, but something. Oh! you mean the holder of the patent? Failed, and blew his brains out afterwards; can't say but it served him right, either."

"It served him *quite* right," cried the inventor fiercely; "he took advantage of the other man's necessities" —

"But we all do that, you know, Mr. Rolf," said the man of knowledge. "I never came across a patent yet that was run on Gospel principles. What I blame this fellow for is for letting himself go before he examined into things. Pen and ink are cheap, and arithmetic taught for nothing; and he ought to have known human nature well enough to see that he hadn't struck a paying job. Well, don't be discouraged; go home and invent something that is cheap to make, and knocks Father Time into the middle of next week — some improvement in the telegraph, for instance, so a man can hear yesterday how stocks stood day after to-morrow — and you'll make a fortune yet. Good-night. Oh, don't mention it! I've really enjoyed our little talk; took me back twenty years."

Twenty years! So his fixed idea, his Moloch, to whom he had sacrificed work, wife, and children, his machine that was to have enabled them to live like princes, had been tried and failed, while he was still a happy schoolboy in Germany! He took the night train for home, and sat gazing into the blank darkness outside the window, his beloved model still carefully cherished upon his knees, — why, he scarcely knew. The conductor shook him twice before he heard the demand for his ticket, and then he only turned his head and stared stupidly, so that the other took the bit of pasteboard himself from the hat-band, where Leppel had mechanically placed it.

"He ain't drunk," the conductor said to the brakeman, afterwards, as they stood together on the front platform; "so he must be either crazy or a blank fool."

The brakeman inspected Leppel through the glass of the door, and concerted measures with the conductor, to be taken if the supposed maniac should become violent. But there was no danger of violence from poor Leppel. He had not yet begun to realize what had happened to him; only he felt queer, and very numb and stupid.

The numbness and stupidity had not worn off when he stepped upon the platform, at Micklegard, of the station nearest his home. The model was heavy, and he was just alive enough to resolve to leave it at the ticket-office. The clerk was known to him, and recognized immediately the package of which he was asked to take charge.

"What ?" he said with cheerful consternation, "fetched it back, after all ? No go, eh ?"

"No," said Leppel, slowly and stupidly, "it was no go." He walked away bent and draggingly. The clerk looked after him, then stowed the model carefully away on a high shelf. "Well, I'm blest !" he said. "I certainly am !"

It was barely daylight of a January morning, and in the upper windows of his home, when he reached it, shone a faint light. A feeble baby wail came down the staircase as he opened the door. Leppel was not too stupid to understand *that.* Another mouth to be fed; that was what the cry meant to the house-father who had thrown away his children's daily bread in pursuit of a shadow. He climbed the steep stairs that led up directly from the little parlor to his bedroom door, where Dora met him, smiling kindly.

"She is doing well," she said, "and it is another fine boy. But, oh !" as she noticed the look upon his face, "don't tell her any bad news if you can help it."

"If I can help it," he said assentingly. His brain seemed only equal to repeating what was said to him. He went into the room, and sat upon a chair by Anna's bedside. They had been bad friends for some time, but he was scarcely awake enough to dread her tongue now.

"Well," she said angrily, "have you nothing to say? You might tell me you are glad I am safe through with it."

"I am glad," he said obediently, "that you are safe through with it."

"And you had better be," she cried. "I don't know what your children would have done without me, — such a father as they have! Here! don't you care to see your baby?"

She pulled the cover from its face, and he inspected it with the same dull obedience, but beginning now to be unpleasantly conscious of Anna's angry eyes. Yet all the while the old love was tugging at her heartstrings, as she read in his face and bearing the story of his failure. But she would not spare him; Anna had not learned to spare either herself or others.

"And your invention? Of course that was a failure, as I always told you!"

"Yes," he said in English, recalling the words of the ticket-clerk, "yes, it was no go."

"And the money all wasted, and your place thrown away, and my children starving!" she cried, her voice growing louder and shriller with each particular; "and now the great stupid fool tells me it was no go. *No go!*" She broke into wild, hysterical laughter, and beat upon her head with her work-worn hands.

They must have turned him out of the room, Leppel supposed, for he found himself in the open air without very well knowing how he came there. There was a heavy fog; and, well though he knew the streets, he was again surprised to find himself suddenly standing upon the bridge across the Mickle River, which at this season of the year, especially after such mild weather as had lately prevailed, was apt to be very high, and, with the melting of the snow in the mountains, to overflow its banks, and work mischief to all in its way.

Leppel stood for some moments stupidly and fixedly regarding the swift, turbid current. Did he lose his balance? Was he seized with sudden giddiness? Or was it a deliberate plunge? No one ever knew.

The policeman who saw him fall had help upon the spot as quickly as it was possible to do so; but it was only the earthly frame of Leopold Rolf that was rescued from the angry waters. The soul of the man whose invention would not pay had gone to carry its cause before the Great Inventor, the Maker of heaven and earth.

CHAPTER VI.

IN BATTALIONS.

ANNA ROLF arose from her bed with her beauty wasted, her youth gone. Instead of the brilliant, joyous girl, there remained the sharp-featured, sharp-tongued woman, whose sound health, clear head, and practical abilities were now, instead of a source of self-satisfaction, viewed by herself merely as a stock in trade, her only capital for the business of taking care of her children. For Leppel's life insurance had been forfeited by the doubt cast upon the manner of his death, and their tiny home was mortgaged to its full value. Even the money designed to purchase his patent had to be returned to those from whom it had been borrowed, some of whom, bad as were the times, declined to receive it, and others would receive only a part; so that fifty dollars in all were left to help the fatherless and widow begin the world for themselves. It was a very good thing, as every one agreed, that Leppel had left his wallet in the pocket of his overcoat, which he had not remembered to put on before he wandered out to his death through that January fog.

The house was sold to satisfy the mortgage, and Anna rented two rooms on the third floor of the tall building that overshadowed the shoemaker's dwelling to the left. Here she established herself as a dressmaker, but for a while found little custom. Karl and Dora had been her true friends throughout, with that sort of friendship which resides not only in the heart but the pocket. Indeed, but for them it is doubtful whether she could have weathered the first six months of her widowhood; for Leppel's relations, who were all in the Far West, had, it is true, helped with his funeral expenses, but declined to be troubled further. He had always been a sort of ugly duckling among those shrewd, close-fisted people — that quiet, silent, unpractical dreamer; but they were very sorry, notwithstanding, that, in spite of his excellent wife, he had come to such a bad end.

"Under the Commune," said Karl Metzerott, with an added bitterness derived from his own personal aggrievement, "Leppel would be alive and an honored citizen."

"I don't know," said Dora doubtfully. "That man in Washington, you know, says that the machine would not pay. Would the Commune adopt a machine that would not pay?"

"It *would* pay, under the Commune," replied Karl; but as this point belonged to the domain of the unprovable, Dora did not argue upon it.

"Well," she said, "at least the Commune would not have been kinder to him than his own wife and his own relations."

"Any woman might be unkind who saw her children threatened with starvation," he answered gloomily.

"Yes," she answered hesitatingly, loath to condemn Anna, yet feeling in her own soul, that she, Dora, would have acted very differently. Then, with a sudden brightness, "Anyway, Karl, the Commune wouldn't make much difference to *us*. We shouldn't be much better off, and we should not act any differently."

"We're pretty good Communists, you and I," he said with a grim smile, "but what have we got by it? I tell you, Dora, we've got to live very close for the next year or so, if we mean to catch up."

"I know it," she answered, smiling; "and, Karl, I've thought of a way to save quite a lot of money. If Anna and her three children can live in two rooms, why can't we? Then we could rent our bedroom, and, when winter comes, that would save coal. For you know we should be obliged to have a fire there on account of Louis," she added apologetically.

"If you don't mind, I don't," he said carelessly. "It won't rent for much, though; but it will give you less to do," with a rather anxious glance at the form and face of his wife. Indeed, Dora was not looking well; she had grown very thin, and her eyes looked pathetically large and blue in her white face. But she laughed off all anxiety; she might be a little pulled down by the warm weather, she said, but that was all.

The next day, a placard appeared in the shop window bearing, in the large, beautiful Italian hand Dora had learned in her German school, the words, "Room for Rent." But a day or two passed before it attracted any attention. On Sunday afternoon Dora and Louis were sitting in the shop door, enjoying the cool evening air after a heavy thunder storm, when two passers-by stopped to consider the announcement, with an air that evidently meant business.

For a moment Dora's heart failed her, then it swelled with sympathy, while baby Louis opened his blue eyes and stared with all his might. Anything quite so tall, and painfully, terribly thin as the elder of these two women, he had never seen in all his little life. When she turned to address Dora, a moment later, she showed a face with large, strongly marked features, whereupon an expression of hopeless patience sat but ill. Her companion was shorter, and of a thinness less painfully apparent; with a face from which all expression, even that of patience, seemed to have been crushed out. It was dull, blank, and hopeless; that was all. They were dressed in thin, shabby calico, bonnets, of which shabby would be too flattering a description, and faded plaid shawls, which they kept so closely drawn over their wasted bosoms that, considering the warmth of the evening, they must have served to cover further defects in their costume. Their voices, when they spoke, were low and weak, not so much from physical weakness — for there was no sign of any actual disease upon either — as with a weary consciousness that speaking louder would not better their condition.

"What rent do you ask for this room, ma'am ?"

"We did wish to get one dollar a month," replied Dora, in her pretty German-English.

The woman shook her head.

"I guess it's worth it too," she said ; "but we ain't got it to pay. Come, Susan."

"Stop one minute," cried Dora as they were about to move on ; "how much do you wish to pay ?"

"'Taint wishin', ma'am ; it's what we *can* do. We've been paying seventy-five cents a month, ever sence we come to town, Susan and me ; but times is hard, and yesterday our landlady raised the rent on us, so we've got to quit."

"I might let you have it for seventy-five," said the young mother softly. Louis seemed to agree with her, for he had already struggled down from her lap, and was clinging triumphantly to Susan's thin hand, which she had involuntarily put out to help him. Louis was not fond of sitting in laps, much preferring his own two sturdy legs as a means of support.

"He's a pretty child," said the elder woman with a dull glance at him. "I used to be fond of children, but, law ! it's no use trying to be fond of nothin' in *this* world. There ain't time."

"Won't you sit down ?" said Dora. "I will bring chairs, and you can tell me about yourselves. Or will you come and see the room ?"

"'Most any room will suit us if the rent does," replied the woman. "We ain't particular, and looking at rooms takes time."

Dora, with Louis clinging to her skirts, brought seats, and the elder woman continued speaking just where she had left off. Indeed, it seemed as though she had at one time been a voluble talker; but that also had been crushed out of her.

"But, of course, you want to know about us, ma'am. Our name is Price, — Susan and Sally Price, and we've kep' respectable, ma'am, though it's been hard work. We are sewing women; work for Grind and Crushem, — that large shirt factory at the end of Blank Street."

"It must be hard work," said Dora pitifully.

"Well, it ain't easy," said Sally Price; "not even as easy as it might be. Some of the factories are running machines by steam, and having all the work done on the premises; but our bosses are too stingy for that. I should think it would pay 'em, though, in the end."

"I will let you have the room," said Dora. "When do you want to come ?"

Decidedly, Dora was a very bad business woman; a short-sighted, easily gulled, and far from sharp business woman.

"We'd like to come to-night, so's to be ready to go to work early to-morrow morning," answered Miss Price with some show of animation. "But won't your husband swear at you, for lettin' it go so cheap ?"

"He never swears at me," said Dora, smiling, blushing, and shaking her head at the same time, until she looked so pretty that even the blank face of Susan Price gained a little life and almost smiled. She held out her hand to

Louis, who was again struggling towards her, and volunteered her first contribution to the conversation.

"Your only one?" she asked.

"Yes, my only one, and *so* good. He is no trouble at all," answered Dora proudly.

"Some folks are happy in this world and some ain't," said Susan Price. "I s'pose it's all right, or it wouldn't *be* so."

"You'd better have some tea with me," returned pitiful Dora, moved almost to tears by the sad patience of this speech. "Then I can show you the room. I'd like you to see it. It has been our own bedroom, but we have spent so much money lately that we must try to save a little. Is there anything to be brought from your other room?"

"Our machine and some clo'es; not many. Susan and me can bring 'em. It's just around the corner. You see, we generally sew Sundays as well as other days. You won't mind if you hear the machine on Sunday, ma'am?"

"If you must, you must," said Dora. "I knit on Sunday, often; I am German. But it is pity; you should rest."

"Oh! we never rest," said Sally quietly. "But maybe it's Sabbath-breakin' that brings us such bad luck. I don't know; but I don't see how to help it."

Metzerott, coming home to his tea, just at this moment, and learning the state of affairs, pooh-poohed the idea of any one but himself fetching the machine and "clo'es" of his new lodgers. Perhaps he wanted an opportunity to make those inquiries, for which Dora's inexperience had not seen the necessity. Their former landlady, however, gave the Prices a high character for quietness, respectability, and prompt pay, "reg'lar as Sat'day evenin' come." They were poor and half starved, she said, but the Lord knew that wasn't their fault; they had lodged with her ever since they came from the country, two years ago, and she thought they would have done better to go out to service; but, at first, they were too proud, she supposed, and now they looked so sick and down-trodden, no respectable person would hire either one of them. Well, Lord knew what this world was coming to, anyway. She would not have raised the rent if she could have helped it; but her husband — and here came an apprehensive glance over her shoulder, which fully accounted for Miss Price's ideas as to swearing.

So the Prices came to be an institution in the Metzerott household; but it was very doubtful whether Dora's savings were greatly increased thereby, even in the matter of steps. For she was always running up those steep, narrow stairs, with Baby Louis on one arm and a plate of raisin bread in the other hand, or perhaps the coffee-pot, if she had "made more than Karl and she could drink, and it never is good warmed over."

Karl had drank warmed-over coffee many a time, and said so smilingly. His wife's efforts at economy were a constant amusement to him; but he never interfered but once. That was on a day in the late fall, when a sudden cold snap seemed doubly disagreeable, because nobody's system had had time to adjust itself to winter requirements. The Prices were not supposed to need adjustment, or, perhaps, by any but Dora, to possess systems; their room was heated by whatever superfluity of hot air might escape from the kitchen. On cold days, this was too little; in moderate weather, too much; only on one or two halcyon days of all the three hundred and sixty-five was that small, poor chamber of a comfortable temperature; but the Prices were used to discomfort, and, especially now that they could warm their fingers at Dora's fire, when they grew numb and useless from cold, would have scorned to complain. So, on this particular cold morning, Karl heard a sudden crash in the kitchen, and, hurrying to the spot, leathern apron and all, found Dora, very white and trembling, looking into his face with eyes like those of a frightened deer.

She had only been going to make a little fire for the Prices, she said; poor souls, she felt so sorry for them; and the hod had slipped from her hand, some way or other.

Poor little frail hand, and fluttering, feeble pulse! such deeds of charity as this are beyond your power henceforth. Karl took in the situation in all its bearings: the thinness of the once rounded form, the panting breath, the varying cheek, the hand unconsciously pressed to the side, the dark, pathetic hollowing of the beautiful eyes. Then he said something beginning with "*tausend*," which would have been totally inadequate had it begun with a million, picked up from the floor the scattered lumps of coal, carried up the hod, and made the fire himself, all in stern, dead silence. But the Prices might make the most of that cheerful blaze; it was the last that glowed upon their hearth for many a long, long day.

Karl had not been blind to the change that had come over Dora, and he would have joyfully given his life — this mortal life, which he held to be all — if he could have lightened the slow, feeble step that smote so heavily upon his heart, or planted anew the delicate roses in her cheek. But what could he do?

His work, which now was chiefly mending, paid poorly, and took up all his time; yet what should they do without it, if he gave his days to helping and nursing Dora? He would willingly have hired some one to do the work for her; but where was the money to come from? Besides, except carrying coal, which he *could* do at odd times, there was nothing, Dora said, in the work itself to tire any one, if she had not been just a little run down and under the weather to begin with. Karl must not worry, she would soon pick up when the spring came again.

Especially, it was not the care of little Louis that tired her; never was there a child that gave so little trouble. He seemed to know by instinct that she was not well, she said, and was as good and quiet as possible, playing as contentedly with a few scraps of leather from his father's bench, and a string of spools given him by Frau Anna, as if they had been toys of ivory and gold. So far from being a trouble, he was even a help, and certainly a comfort to her. It was only to Louis that Dora confided how her head ached and throbbed, and the incessant cough racked her feeble body; and Louis listened with serious blue eyes and rapt attention. It was a very interesting story indeed, he thought; almost equal to that of the dead canary they found one December morning on the window-sill; as to which he never tired of hearing how it had strayed from its home, and perished in the bitter night. And, though of either tale he could have understood but little, his sympathy was always ready, and he stroked the bird's cold feathers and his mother's aching forehead with soft baby fingers, saying pityingly, "Oh! my, my, my." These were the only words at his command, but they satisfied Dora.

Dr. Richards, for whose skill she had a respect amounting to veneration, had prescribed for the cough, and for a while it had seemed better; but it grew worse after one bitter morning when she had run over to the butcher's with a shawl pinned over her head, and blown back from her chest by the icy wind.

And then came a time when help came in unhired and unsought, when Dora lay powerless upon the grandmother's testered bed, with Baby Louis beside her, happy in her society and his string of spools. It was a great treat to have his mamma so close beside him all day long; and he was by no means pleased when their *tête-à-tête* was broken by a visit from Dr. Richards, though the latter did his best to look cheerful. Metzerott stood also by the bed, but would by no means smile or play "Peep-bo" with Louis, so absorbed was he in listening to the doctor. But "acute pleuro-pneumonia" had no meaning whatever to a baby mind; so the child shook his plump little hand, and said "Bye-bye" very politely to the doctor, as a signal that the visit might as well be brought to a close. Dr. Richards, however, whose heart was very tender towards children, and who had a little maiden babe about Louis' age, remembered to bring him a little harmless candy the next day, and they became quite good friends during the few days of Dora's illness.

For there came a day when he was carried up to Frau Anna's narrow quarters, and played all day very happily with Fritz, Annie, and little George. This was nice indeed, if his mamma had but been there to share his pleasure. Very often he paused in his fun to call her, "Mamma! Mamma!" in his sweet bird-like voice. Frau Anna cried when he did so, and called him "poor motherless lamb," which he considered a new kind of game, and laughed at delightedly.

The next day was Christmas itself; but if Louis had had a longer experience in Christmases, he would surely have considered that he celebrated that blessed feast in a most singular manner. For he was taken to his own home, where, in the shop, several neighbors were assembled, all with solemn faces, and some shedding tears. Louis sat on his father's knee, and surveyed them all, until his attention was caught by a long black box in the middle of the room, near which stood Pastor Schaefer. The box had shining handles, which took his baby fancy immensely; so he slid suddenly from his father's hold, and, before any one could stop him, rushed across the room, and seized the bright handle with a joyous shout.

The women present broke into loud sobs, but no one interfered with him; and he played with his new toy all through the pastor's prayer and exhortation. Then some one lifted him up, and there in the box lay his mamma, white and still, with closed eyes. But this also was part of the game, thought Louis; and his baby laugh rang out strangely in the silent room. Then, as she took no notice, he pulled at her dress, saying impatiently, "Up! Up!" and when, for the first time in all his little life, she was deaf to his voice, his rosy lip quivered, and he burst into tears of helpless, hopeless, baby grief.

There followed a long drive in a close carriage, — quite a new experience, which he would have better enjoyed had the curtains been up, and his companions not quite so silent. He sat very still on his father's knee, one dimpled hand clasped in that of Frau Anna, who sat beside him. The Price sisters were opposite, grieving sincerely for poor Dora, it is true; but they had been surprised that morning by a box from their old country home, containing such a store of eatables as would last them a long while, and grief and surprise together had so lightened the usual blank monotony of their faces that they looked almost happy.

This air of relief Karl Metzerott saw and resented, as he resented the garlanded shop windows, the bright faces of the passers-by, even the crisp air and sparkling sunshine. What right had the world to rejoice and be glad, when his young wife lay dead in her coffin, murdered by those very rich men whose gay carriages rattled past the hearse that bore her to her grave, in whose coffers lay buried the wealth that would have saved her?

From this day the shoemaker grew more silent and gloomy, less fond of the society of his fellows, more given to sullen brooding over the wrongs of the poor and the cruelty, oppression, and self-indulgence of the rich. It was well that to this temper Baby Louis served as a safety valve; for Karl kept stern silence when social questions were debated at Männerchor Hall or other places of friendly meeting. What did they know about it, he said scornfully, not one of whom had ever lost a Dora? Besides, until the time for action came, why waste one's strength in words?

But he grew eloquent when Louis sat upon his knee in the late twilight, while he smoked his pipe; and the child, with grave blue eyes upraised to his father's face, listened to tales of wrong and oppression as other children hearken to the woes of Cinderella or the terrible fate of Rothkäppchen.

They were always together. Metzerott rose very early, dressed Louis, prepared breakfast, and tidied the kitchen, all much more handily than could have been expected. Then father and son departed hand in hand to the shop, where all day long the child played happily with his few poor toys, or sat by his father's side, watching, entranced, the movements of his skilful hands.

Metzerott asserted that the boy brought him good luck, and certainly his trade had greatly improved; but prosperity had rather a hardening than a softening effect, since it had come too late to save his wife.

And still he poured out all his anger, grief, and hardness of heart to little Louis, and felt, perhaps, gentler and more forgiving for the telling, like King David when he had cried to God in the Psalms for vengeance on his enemies.

CHAPTER VII.

"'VIDING."

"PAPA!" said Louis, one autumn evening. The child, just five years old, was perched, as usual, upon his father's knee, his golden head nestled against his father's breast. They were an oddly contrasted pair; Metzerott, with his powerful, yet apparently clumsy frame, brown, rugged face, and hair just beginning — though he was not yet forty years old — to be touched with gray, while Louis had his mother's face, refined and spiritualized into absolute loveliness. His grave blue eyes could be merry enough at times; but as he lifted them now to his father's face, there was a solemn purity in their gaze, at sight of which Metzerott drew the boy closer to his breast, in a sudden, irrational terror of losing him.

"Well," he said.

"Papa, why did my mamma die?" He spoke a baby patois, half English, half German, which we should vainly attempt to reproduce.

"Because we are poor, my son, and were even poorer then. If your mother could have been nursed and done for, like a rich lady with plenty of money and crowds of servants, she would have been alive now. Money, my boy, was the medicine she needed."

"If I were President," said Louis after a thoughtful pause, "I would make more money, so that every one might have enough."

Metzerott smiled, even while he shook his head. "There's money enough, or so people say, and making more would only lower the value of what there is. That was tried during the war, Louis. The trouble is that all the money is in too few hands. Some have more than enough, and others have nothing. As if I should eat all the dinner, you know, and leave none for you."

"You wouldn't do that," said Louis confidently.

"Nor the millionnaires sha'n't much longer," said Metzerott. "When we get the Commune, Louis, every man who has more than he needs — yes, and we'll cut his 'needs' down pretty close, too — will have to divide with his poor neighbors."

"What is ''vide'?" asked Louis, who had often heard of the Commune.

Metzerott showed him practically, by means of a box of lead soldiers that had been given to the child that day, and which was cherished fondly in one chubby arm.

"Now," said the shoemaker, arranging these in two files upon his mother's old candle-stand, which stood at his elbow, "now, if you were to give half of these to George Rolf, and keep this row for yourself, that would be dividing with him."

"I fink," said Louis, "I don't like 'viding."

"No more will the millionnaires," said Metzerott, laughing; "but if you were George, my boy, with no lead soldiers at all to play with, maybe you'd like it better. Why, Louis, there is money enough in the country to buy every poor man in it all that he needs; and there is food enough grown every year to fill every hungry mouth from Maine to Florida; yet people die by hundreds, like your poor mother, of want and toil, just because those who have won't divide with those who have not."

"*I* will," said Louis, "I'll 'vide my soldiers with George, right away."

"George is abed long ago," said Metzerott, surprised, amused, and a little touched, at this unexpected result of his lecture; "and high time you were there, too. Put off your 'viding until to-morrow."

He was still more astonished, and almost remorseful, next morning, to see the child march off, with a very sober face, and his box of soldiers under his arm. Frau Anna's rooms were still in the topmost story of the house next door; and Louis climbed the stairs patiently, and arrived panting, but resolute, at the familiar door.

"George," he said, "I've come to 'vide my soldiers with you."

"*Du Engelchen!*" cried Frau Anna, dropping her sewing to clasp her hands. "Who put that into your head, my lamb?"

"Papa," said Louis. "It's so every one will have enough to eat and to wear," he added explanatorily.

"*Du lieber Himmel!*" said Frau Anna, "much good your 'viding will do, you poor baby. Folks as poor as us must keep all we get for ourselves."

Louis was happily far too busy to hear this speech, with which, as we know, Frau Anna's practice did not exactly correspond. The question of dividing offered sufficient practical difficulty to absorb his whole attention; but by following his father's example and marshalling his army into two columns, he at last succeeded, to the mutual satisfaction of himself and his playmate.

Time passed very happily until noon, when Louis trotted home, to announce to his father that it was "nice to 'vide. When we bofe play togevver, it's as good as if they was all mine," he said.

For all reply, Metzerott produced a brown paper package of a charmingly mysterious shape, and watched with a lurking smile the eager little fingers struggle with the string.

"Oh! what is it?" cried little Louis.

It was of tin, painted in gay colors, and it spun upon the floor, upon being wound, with a loud humming noise.

"Now," said Metzerott, when the first edge of delight had worn off, "how about George? you can't divide a top with him."

"No," returned Louis with a mournful shake of his head, "you can't 'vide one top."

He leaned his chin upon his two plump hands, as he sat tailor fashion on the floor, and delivered himself up to contemplation of the top, which lay just where it had toppled over from its last spin, as if there were inspiration in its gaudy hues. Presently he looked up brightly.

"I know," he said, "we can spin it togevver, and it can be bofe of ours. That's the only way to 'vide a top!"

"You're your mother's own son," said Metzerott. "Come, dinner is ready, let's see how you 'vide that. There's a splendid pot of soup, enough for a dozen; so never say your father can't cook."

But scarcely had they seated themselves at the table when a heavy fall in the room above was followed by two shrill, feeble, feminine shrieks. Metzerott ran hastily up the stairs, which he had not ascended since the death of his wife, followed more slowly by Louis, to whom they were more familiar, though the silent pre-occupation of the sisters had not tended to encourage his visits.

The Prices had recently taken a young niece to share their room, and earn her own bread if she could; and she it was who now lay upon the floor with her head upon Sally's thin bosom, while Susan chafed the unconscious hand, and wept. She was evidently quite young, and the battle with want and toil, while it had wasted her form and paled her cheek, had not lasted long enough to destroy her youth and beauty.

"She ain't used to it yet, Mr. Metzerott," said Sally Price half apologetically. "I'm sorry to disturb you at your dinner, sir, specially if it's as good as it smells. Them that has ought to enjoy," she added without a trace of bitterness.

"I'm not caring for my dinner," answered Metzerott roughly. "I'll get her some whiskey; that's what she wants."

There was silence in the room until he returned, except that, when Louis, not seeing any other way of being useful, wiped the eyes of the weeping Susan with his blue-checked gingham apron, she asked Sally if it wasn't beautiful to see how that child favored his mother, to which Sally replied that the Lord knew it was indeed.

The whiskey, which Metzerott procured at the nearest saloon, was vile stuff perhaps, but it brought back the color to Polly's white lips.

"She'll do now, Mr. Metzerott, and thank you kindly," said Miss Price. "We've got a little bread here we can give her; and this is Saturday, bless the Lord, so we'll be able to buy more."

"More bread?" asked Metzerott, who, man-like, had never attained to a realizing sense of his lodgers' domestic affairs, "is that all you've got to give her?"

"It's all we ever have," replied Sally calmly. "Bless you, sir, what can you expect, with shirts five cents a dozen? But Polly, she was raised in the country, till her father and mother both died in one week with the typhoid, and her brother got married; and she come to the city to better herself, the Lord help her! So, what with not being used to sewing so constant, and nothing to eat, so to speak, and the smell of your dinner, Mr. Metzerott, — though I'm the last to begrutch it to you, sir, as works as hard as any, and has had your own troubles, — why, her head turned giddy, and she fainted clean away. That's all, sir."

"And quite enough, too," said Metzerott, watching how, as she spoke, Sally fed her niece with fragments of bread, dipped in the whiskey and water, — not a very palatable refreshment, one would suppose, yet Polly swallowed it eagerly.

"Now, that's enough liquor for the present, Polly Price," said her aunt; "you can eat the rest of your bread dry, and be thankful you've got it. She's a good girl, Mr. Metzerott, and a pretty girl, though I say so; and there's them that has eyes to see it, and would keep her like a queen if she would listen to their wicked words."

Polly groaned, and hid her face upon her aunt's thin shoulder.

"It's young Crushem, the contractor's son," continued Sally. "And when he spoke to her as I tell you, sir, Polly she comes home, and she says, says she, 'It's hard to put the bread from your mouth when you're starving,' she says. And then Susan there, she says, 'It's only putting off the starving a bit, Polly,' says she. 'Money made that way don't never last long, and you'll come to the garret and the crust at last,' says she. 'But he's promised to settle money on me, so as I could take care of you both,' says Polly. 'Bless you, Polly Price,' says I, 'we're used to it,' says I; 'we can stand it if you can,' says I. And Polly, she says, kinder cryin', 'I thought I couldn't, Aunt Sally,' she says. 'I told him I'd think over it, and I'd about made up my mind to say yes; but when that child downstairs looked at me with his solemn blue eyes, I knew I'd better starve than be a wicked girl,' says Polly."

Metzerott had listened to this long story with a frown of sympathy contracting his rugged features. But at this point a hand pulled at his short working-jacket, and a sweet voice said, "Papa, don't you think we'd better 'vide our dinner? There's soup enough for a dozen, and don't ever say my father can't cook!"

Metzerott caught the boy in his arms. "Do you hear the emperor?" he cried. "Louis Napoleon must be obeyed. Come down to dinner, all of you!"

It was good to see the starving women eat, and Louis' face bright with the joy of 'viding. Metzerott, as he watched them, knew not whether to be glad or sorrowful. That there should be no more starving under his roof he was quite determined, yet how to take upon himself the support of three full-grown women? At last a happy thought came to him.

"I have been thinking," he said, when the meal was over, and his guests were regretfully wiping their mouths, "I have been thinking, Miss Sally, what a convenience it would be to me if one of you ladies would do my cooking, and housekeep for me regular. You might take it in turn, if you liked; a little exercise don't hurt nobody, and *I* shouldn't care. Then we could all eat together sociable, and you could do your sewing just the same, unless you could find other work."

He said nothing of the rent, which indeed had not been demanded or paid since Dora's death.

The sisters looked at each other in silence for a moment, while Polly burst at once into tears; then Susan's head went down on the table, and Sally, with clasped hands and eyes uplifted, cried fervently, "Bless the Lord!"

"Don't cry," said Metzerott hastily; "it'll be cheaper to me in the end, now that trade's so brisk, than knocking off to go to market and cook every five minutes or so. I've been knowing for quite a while that I should have to hire somebody; but I didn't want no strange women around, and I'm ashamed to say I never thought of you."

"And you know," said Louis, who had scrambled down from the table, and was hugging Polly Price, "you know we've got to 'vide some day, and I'm glad of it because it's so awful jolly."

"The boy is a good Communist," said Metzerott, laughing; "and now, if you ladies feel able to wash the dishes, I'll go back to my work."

"There's pretty near enough soup for to-morrow," said Sally Price, peeping into the big iron pot. "My laws! wasteful ain't the name for a man!"

CHAPTER VIII.

MULTIPLICATION.

"THERE'S just this about it," said Sally Price, "Mr. Metzerott ain't goin' to be no loser by *us*, and that settles it."

"He'll get paid for his kindness in heaven, anyhow," returned Susan tearfully.

"Heaven!" the scorn in Miss Price's voice was for Susan, not the country she had named. "He's goin' to get paid right here on earth, and you can just take hold and help me, Susan Price, instead of settin' there a-snivellin'. Some folks thinks a deal too much of heaven, anyway."

"Why, Aunt Sally!"

"It's as true as the Gospel, child. I don't say but it's a nice place, heaven, after you get there; and when you're real tired and hungry and sick, and not a minute to take a long breath, it's a solid satisfaction to think as there's a time comin' when you won't need to eat nor breathe nor work no more; but I don't believe in settin' on your haunches, when a man's feedin' you out of his own pocket, and talk about his havin' his reward in heaven. If folks that talk so much about heaven hereafter would quit right off, and set to work to make things a little more like heaven *here*, 'twould be lots better. We, includin' Polly, wouldn't 'a' been so near the other place, Susan Price, if things was run on that plan here below."

"That's so," answered Susan meekly.

"I went once to see a preacher, and ask him to get us somethin' to do," said Sally. "It wasn't long after we come to town, and before we'd begun sewin' on Sunday, so I went Sunday afternoon. He was a real nice man, always shook hands with both hands, and had an awful affectionate manner, and I thought he'd be the very one to help us. Well, he said he was sorry we were so bad off, though he guessed there was others worse off than us; for that was before our good clo'es wore out, and I looked pretty nice. Then he told me how many people in his congregation were in want of somethin' to do; and said we ought to be thankful for any kind of a job, no matter how little it paid."

"Well, I don't know about that," said Susan.

"I *do*," cried Polly impetuously. "A job that takes all your time to earn enough to keep from starving is just robbery and slavery, that's all."

Aunt Sally assented gravely. "If you leave your work to look for another job, you are sure to starve before you find one," she said, "and you might as well be chained to a oar, like those people in the ancient history. Fact is, we was worse off than galley-slaves, Sue; for 'twas the captain's interest to keep *them* alive."

"But it's nobody's interest to keep sewing-women alive," said Polly bitterly; "there's plenty to take our places, if we drop. The labor market is over-stocked, they say."

"That's what my preacher said," replied Sally; "and all the comfort he had for me was that, if I did my duty, and came to church reg'lar, I'd git to heaven finally. I thanked him for his good advice, but I ain't been to his church since."

"Mr. Metzerott don't believe in heaven," said Polly, "maybe that's why he's so kind to us here on earth."

"I believe in heaven," said Susan slowly.

"You ain't quite a born fool, Susan Price, that's why.

Of course the good Lord is goin' to fix things so the poor will have a fair show somewhere. But we ain't the good Lord, so far's I know; and it's our place to keep things fair and right on this earth, so far's we can."

"And that ain't far," said Susan.

"It's as far as Mr. Metzerott, anyhow," returned Sally rather sharply, "and we ain't got no call to go no further, yit. And what I'm thinking about is his baker's bill."

The Prices were alive and awake again, no doubt about it; as for Polly, she had never been asleep. Her strong, vivid, ardent nature, craving happiness with every fibre, could never, I think, have sunk into that tired and hopeless acquiescence in things as they ought not to be, that inanition of mind, heart, and soul, which had long ago devoured the youth and vitality of the sisters. And yet the vitality, after all, had not utterly departed, and the feeble currents in their veins stirred in sympathy with the young life beating its wings against the bars of poverty, and tugging so vainly at the chain of starvation wages. Then came rescue and hope, and the awakening was complete.

Sally Price possessed, without being at all conscious of it, a rare organizing faculty. Perhaps no other sewing-woman in Micklegard could have accomplished as much with four hands and only one machine as she had done; but the very impossibility of doing much with such slight materials, the consciousness of wasted power, and sense of the injustice which for such grinding work gave such ground-down wages, had helped to crush out from her heart everything but hopeless patience. That she had not grown hard and bitter was a strange and beautiful thing; perhaps, even before the advent of Polly, there were *three* at work in that poor upper room, even as *four* walked in the Holy Children's burning, fiery furnace.

But now, Sally had something to organize, and a purpose in the organization; she was quite resolved, as she said, that Mr. Metzerott "shouldn't lose nothin'" by his kindness to her and hers. Whether his expenses were exactly the same as when he himself had constituted his whole domestic staff, with the exception of an old woman who came three times a week to do "chores" and washing, is doubtful; but they were certainly not materially increased; and, taking into account the shoemaker's additional time for work, the arrangement might be considered one of great economy. First of all, there was the baker, who had swallowed all the Prices' earnings in the past, in return for a very moderate portion of the staff of life, strongly flavored with alum. Miss Price made up her mind at once that the baker must go. At her suggestion, Karl bought a bag of flour, and Polly, who was said to be a "master hand" at the process, was appointed bread-maker in chief; while Sally and Susan took their turn of exercise at the wash-tub and ironing-board.

Sally managed it all. They did fully as much work for Grind and Crushem; for, after all, only a certain amount *can* be done with one machine, and there was always one of them with her foot on the treadle; while the little house was nearly scrubbed into holes, and everything about it cleaned until it shone again. The old woman vanished; chores became a thing of the past; and Polly's delicate cooking gave Karl, as he declared, a new pleasure in eating.

Then began the old story of the loaves and fishes, inevitable multiplication. One day Louis brought home the tidings that Frau Anna had a bad headache, so bad that she could not lift her head from her pillow, and the children had no dinner but bread.

"I guess I'll go in and see to 'em," said Sally thoughtfully. "Now I've got to eatin' reg'lar meals again, it seems pretty bad to have nothin' but bread for dinner."

She went accordingly. There was in the cupboard a piece of cold, cooked beef about four inches square, an onion, and three raw Irish potatoes; for, as Frau Anna explained, she had not been able to go out to buy anything that day.

"Buy!" said Sally, "why should you? There's dinner enough here for these children, with bread, and that you've got plenty of. But I know you don't want no smell of cookin' under your nose, so the children can come and play with Louis; and by and by I'll send you over some tea and toast."

The beef, potatoes, and onion, chopped up into an iron skillet, covered with water, and re-enforced by a spoonful of turnips and the remains of a can of tomatoes, which Sally had been keeping for some occasion when they would "come in handy," produced, at the end of twenty minutes, a very savory stew, to which the children did ample justice. But the tea and toast which after a while Sally carried in to her neighbor became the occasion of such sighs over the days when Frau Anna had made her own bread, and her children had had wholesome food to eat, that it resulted, a day or two later, in an offer from Polly to bake for Frau Anna along with themselves.

"And I don't see why I shouldn't do your cooking, all of it," said Polly. "Sally keeps such a strict account of all we spend that she could tell in a minute what you ought to pay."

"The cost of the things in market, and maybe a little extra to Mr. Metzerott for the fire," said Sally. "I used to be quick at figures, Mis' Rolf; and if I ain't forgot how, I'll cipher it out, and let you know. You needn't be afraid we'll cheat you, or make anything out of you; we've been made too much out of ourselves."

But when it was also arranged that they should do Frau

Anna's washing, Sally concluded that they might give up their work at Grind and Crushem's.

"And how it feels to be free again, you won't never know, Mr. Metzerott," she said, when the deed had been done.

"Now I want to know," said Karl, looking up from his work with a quizzical smile, "what's the difference between the way you're living now and domestic service. Wouldn't it have been better to live out with some rich person, who would have paid good wages, than to work for Grind and Crushem ?"

"Maybe it would," said Sally thoughtfully. "Hired girls do get good wages, that's so."

"It's your American independence," said Metzerott. "You don't find German girls willing to starve rather than live out."

"There wasn't much independence at *our* shop," answered Sally dryly. "I don't know why it is, Mr. Metzerott, but American girls won't live out ef they can do anything else; or ef they do, they feel kinder degraded, and it makes 'em so uppish and contrary there's no livin' in the house with 'em. I've seen 'em real sassy, just because they felt lowered in their own eyes."

"They were fools!" said Metzerott briefly. "What is there in honest work to degrade any one?"

"'Tain't the work," said Sally; "they'd do that at home, and not feel a mite degraded; and 'tain't the wages, for 'twouldn't degrade 'em to earn that behind a counter. Nor 'tain't *sass*, though there's many a lady as talks to her help like I wouldn't to a dog. Only way I can explain it, Mr. Metzerott, it must be the Constitution of the United States. You see *that* makes every man as good as anybody else; but it ain't lived up to, and the girls feel it, and that's what riles 'em. Worse than that, they feel they *ain't* as good as the young ladies they wait on, not so pretty, nor so educated, nor so refined; but they might have been if they'd had the same advantages; they might have had just such little white hands and soft voices and pretty ways, that keep the young men a-bendin' over their chairs all the evenin'. Don't you s'pose many a girl sees the difference between her farmer beau and the young city doctor or lawyer that comes to the country for his holiday?" (Poor Sally! perhaps she spoke from some past bitter experience of her own!) "And so I think it's *that*, Mr. Metzerott, that keeps girls from hirin' out. They won't take a menial position where they feel, if they had their rights, they'd be equals, — real equals, I mean, not constitutional or sassy ones. Now, your German girls ain't taught about equality; they are used to counts and barons and dukes, and all of them people, from their cradles; they ain't got freedom in the blood, like us Americans."

"But we breathe it in," said Metzerott, with gleaming eyes; "and then the remembrance of past wrongs, and the sight of present ones, makes us desperate. We shall teach you Americans, some day, to live up to your own principles."

"But you won't get us to fire a gun," said Sally tersely, "till we can see the whites of their eyes."

CHAPTER IX.

FORS FORTUNA.

The very next day, Louis, by what his father and Dr. Richards would have agreed to call "blind chance," found a silver quarter lying in the gutter before his own door. Yet it was certainly not blind chance, but sheer hard work, that had worn a hole in Frau Anna's thimble.

Louis had been wishing very much that he could buy her another, for she had said that it was almost impossible to use the old one. Once the needle had slipped in through the hole, and run up under her nail, which had hurt her very much indeed; and the necessity of keeping it away from the worn place hindered her work. Louis and George had talked the matter over very seriously, with many wishes that they were as big as Franz and Bruno, the pastor's sons, and could earn money by chopping wood and shovelling snow. And now here was a whole silver quarter, which would surely buy many things beside a thimble.

He started at once in search of George, whom he found sitting on a box outside the grocery, consuming an apple which had been given him by the grocer's wife. Now, if the apple had been Louis', a part of it would as surely have found its way to George as the early worm finds out the nest where the mother bird's brood wait to welcome it; but this view of the case did not occur to any one but the good-natured grocery woman, who showed her appreciation of the situation by bestowing another apple on Louis.

But before the child would bite even once into its red and tempting cheeks, he related to George all the circumstances concerning the finding of the quarter, and the marvellous purchasing power thereto appertaining.

"Where does the thimble-man live?" asked George, when they had planned to buy everything in town, — from a live pony to a penny trumpet.

"I don't know," said Louis gravely; but the grocery woman, who had been standing in the doorway listening to the conversation, with her hands on her hips, probably to keep her fat sides steady, they shook so with laughter, interrupted them.

"Do you know where Martin, the jeweller, lives?"

"Yes," said Louis brightly. "'Tisn't far; he mended our clock."

"Well," said the grocery woman, "you go to him, and tell him you want a thimble. Mind you say who it's for. *Himmel!* There was a day when he'd have given a thousand thimbles to call your mother Anna Martin."

"That ain't her name," said George slowly, "her name is Anna Rolf."

The fat sides shook again. "You do as I tell you," she said; "and see here, Louis Metzerott, you eat that apple up, do you hear, and don't give none of it to nobody. Apples is good for boys, they fall in their legs, and make 'em grow. *Verstanden?*"

"Yes, ma'am," said Louis, obediently taking such a very large bite that he had some difficulty in disposing of it.

"And if I was you," continued the grocery woman, "I'd buy the thimble first, and see how much you have left towards a pony. Fact is, ponies are expensive to feed, anyhow; and I wouldn't advise you to invest in 'em just yet. Won't it do just as well if I buy you each a gingerbread horse, next time I go to market?"

"No, ma'am, not *quite* as well, because a pony is alive, and we could ride on it," said Louis gravely. "But a gingerbread horse is very good to eat," he added politely.

"Herr Martin," said Louis, as the two children trotted, hand in hand, into the shop, "we want to buy a thimble."

"Presently, my boy," said the jeweller, setting upon the counter a tray full of small, dainty-looking pins. "Now, ma'am," he said; but his customer's attention had been drawn from his wares to the purer gold that curled under Louis' woollen cap.

"What a dear little boy," she said, "and so straight and strong!" Her red lip was caught for one moment between her teeth, a mist came over the brown eyes, she turned away, and busied herself in selecting a pin.

Her husband, who had been leaning idly against the window frame, looking into the street, — for jewelry did not particularly interest Dr. Richards, — now came and stood at her elbow. He said nothing, but his mere presence and the consciousness of his sympathy strengthened her nobler self, so that in a little while she turned to Louis again, with a smile that was sad but very sweet.

"Attend to the children, Mr. Martin," she said; "they don't like to wait. Are you buying a thimble for your mother, my little man?"

"My mother's dead," said Louis, "because we are poor, and the millionnaires wont 'vide. This thimble is for George's mother."

"You don't remember the boy, Alice," said Dr. Richards; "indeed I don't know that you ever saw him; he is Dora Metzerott's child."

"He is very like her," said Alice slowly. Her mind went back to the days when she and Dora had been "evened" to one another as equally headstrong in marrying for love and disregarding orthodoxy. She would be proud and happy to be "evened" to Dora now, in another respect.

Meanwhile Herr Martin had produced a case of thimbles, by whose silvery brightness the boys were so impressed that they began to doubt whether their quarter would buy so very many of them after all.

"But how much money have you got?" asked the jeweller.

"A real quarter," answered Louis proudly. "I found it this morning."

"Oh! found it, did you? Then how do you know but it belongs to me?"

"You're in fun," said the child gravely; "my papa said it might belong to me."

"Oh! well, if your papa said so! But doesn't any of it belong to George?"

"Yes," said Louis, "me and George always 'vides everyfing."

"That's just about where it is," said the jeweller, with a glance at his older customers, who were listening attentively, "me and George 'vides; George and me *don't* always. But, I say, young uns, you don't suppose I can sell you a thimble for twenty-five cents, do you?"

Louis' lip quivered. "Can't you?" he said. "It is for George's mother; and Frau Tundt said there was a day when you'd give a thousand thimbles to call her Anna Martin."

"Did Frau Tundt say that?" cried the jeweller, crossing his arms on the counter and laughing heartily. "Well, she's right; so I would, so I would! Ah! she was a fine girl, and no mistake."

Still laughing, he selected a very pretty thimble, rapidly enclosed it in a pink-cottoned box, wrapped that again in white paper, and gave it to Louis.

"There," he said, "give that to Frau Anna with a

Christmas greeting from her old sweetheart. No, I don't want your quarter. Keep it to buy seed-cakes."

"Thank you, sir," said Louis. "'A Christmas greeting from her old sweetheart!' I won't forget. But what is Christmas?" he added.

"Ach! that father of yours, with his free-thinking! Can you believe it, Mrs. Richards! a man who won't let his boy have a Christmas," cried Herr Martin indignantly.

Alice stooped and kissed the sweet face. "I knew your mother, my dear, and I will come to see you soon, and tell you about Christmas. It is a beautiful story."

Dr. and Mrs. Richards drove home very silently. It was not often that they had the pleasure of an hour's shopping together, and yet this expedition in preparation for Christmas had had its own bitterness. It had been seven years since Frederick Richards asked Alice Randolph to share a future which his pessimism forbade him to gild with hope; seven years since she had announced her choice of misery with rather than happiness without him. Which had she found? There had been love in her lot, plenty of it; and, though not wealth, yet no touch of "poortith cauld." Yet the silence between them was a sad silence; and once Alice laid her hand on his arm, and said, half below her breath, —

"Fred, tell me, how do you bear your life, not believing, or trying to believe, that God knows best, and orders all for our good?"

"Do you believe that, Alice?" he asked.

"I try," she said; "oh! indeed I try hard."

"That's right," he said gently; "it is the best comfort you can find."

"But it does *seem* unjust," she said. "Look at that little Louis, so strong and active, and then think of" —

"Well, well," he answered, "Freddy has his own pleasures. I don't know a happier boy."

"That is true," she said, with a smile through her tears; "he is very happy!" and then she sank again into her own thoughts, and forgot to notice that her question remained unanswered.

In a few moments they stopped at their own door; and Alice, flying upstairs to what was still called the nursery, was greeted by a rapturous shout, and clasped by two little arms that seemed as if they would never unclose to let her go again. And Alice, sitting on the floor while she removed her bonnet, had no mist of tears to dim her brown eyes, which were so much like Freddy's own; she was the bright, merry playfellow, full of life and fun, and brimming over with wonderful and delightful songs and stories of all descriptions. Dr. Richards, too, brought only sunshine into Freddy's nursery; he took off his pessimism with his overcoat, or left it bottled in alcohol on a shelf in his office; so there was really little wonder that Freddy was happy.

Who can tell just how it happened? Was it mere blind chance, or the outcome of a taint in the blood, due to some unknown ancestral sin? Whatever the cause, Alice Richards had been, as the phrase goes, "unlucky with her children." The eldest had died in babyhood: and the boy, with his great, pathetic brown eyes and laughing, rosy mouth, would never walk; his little spine was all bent and distorted, and his lower limbs quite useless. He had suffered much already in his short four years of life, would suffer far more as he grew older. Dr. Richards knew this, —knew it so keenly that that other knowledge, that by scarce a possibility could Freddy live to be a man, was almost a relief by contrast. And the child was his father's idol. Well might Alice ask how he could bear his life.

Yet there was plenty of merriment at that little dinner-table. Freddy was carried down between his father and John, the doctor's "man." There were rings on the sides of Freddy's chair through which poles could be passed, and there were screws to tighten them, so that the transit need cause no jar to the little frame. John went first, not backward, for fear of a misstep, but with the poles over his shoulders; and the doctor came behind, keeping his end of the poles level with John's. Freddy wore a little scarlet wrapper, embroidered with gay flowers, and concealing the poor shrunken limbs, from which any eye but his mother's would have instinctively turned away. He had a small pale face, with a broad forehead set in rings of brown hair, large brown eyes, and vividly red lips. Sometimes, too, there was a bright spot of color on either cheek, and then one would almost have called him a beautiful child; but that sort of beauty was not a welcome sight to Dr. Richards.

The child enjoyed going down to dinner as he enjoyed everything; and beat upon the arms of the chair with his little thin hands, as he called gleefully, "Look out, mamma, here comes the 'Ark of the Covenant!'" which was a name he had taken from his picture Bible.

Freddy's greatest pleasure was to hear his mother's stories, and she had the gift of finding true ones as interesting as any fairy tale. One of his favorites soon became the story of the little boy who had no mamma, and had never heard of Christmas, such deprivations, in Freddy's eyes, that the little boy's health and activity could not be accepted as in the remotest degree a compensation.

"We must tell him about Christmas right away, mamma," said Freddy, who was old and wise beyond his years. "If he only had a picture of the Christ-child, now."

"That's a good suggestion, Freddy. I'll make a copy of yours. I think I can do it before Christmas."

"And he can come to my tree, mamma?"

"Just as you like, my darling."

Freddy's picture of the Christ-child was one which had evidently been adapted from Ary Scheffer's "Christus Liberator;" but the central figure was that of a smiling child, whose little arms were outstretched to those haggard and chained, appealing for deliverance. Around it was written the angels' song, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will towards men." Dr. Richards had noted with inward bitter amusement the picture and the motto. "Good will towards men!" and all those hungry, burdened arms! and only a child to work their liberation! It was Christianity's pictured confession of her own futility, he thought. Meanwhile, it satisfied his wife and child, who surely needed all the comfort they could get; and what had he, that was better, to give them? So he held his peace, or rather that simulation of peace which is found in silence. Real peace he had none, either to hold or let go. For, seeing no trace in all the universe of a sheltering, guiding, and protecting Father's hand, — holding the world to be governed by blind, unconscious, irresistible force, — there were two questions ever present to his mind: one, "How would my boy endure one day of absolute poverty?" the other, "If my health should fail, as it may, who will protect him from this, or any evil?"

Blind chance? Even the old Romans knew better. Was not Fors Fortuna the goddess of the all-seeing, radiant dawn?

CHAPTER X.

HOMINIBUS BONÆ VOLUNTATIS.

All the world was getting ready for Christmas; there was no doubt about that. As for South Micklegard, as the German quarter was usually called, it was absolutely upon its head with delight. For there is no season of the year that a German loves better than the winter solstice, the ancient yule feast of his far-away forbears, the birthday of the "Golden Child," as the Veda hath it. Is it indeed the true birthday of the child Christ Jesus? Who knows!

Nay, oh my brothers! who, with your factions, and the smoke of your unbrotherly strife rising to heaven, have marred every scene, every step of that sinless life, — let us be thankful for that which remains unknown. Birthday and death-day, His cradle, Golgotha, and the sepulchre whence rose His living body, the Father keeps hidden in the holy silence of His own recollection. Therefore, since with Him is neither past nor future, but an eternal now, those days are ever present with us. Each morn, each evening, He is born again, dies again, for us, in us; and finds in our hearts His Bethlehem, His Calvary, His tomb.

It was Louis' first Christmas, so far as his own consciousness was concerned. His mother had indeed set out his little socks for the Christ-child to fill, when he was but six months old, and had not yet put on shoes; but Louis certainly remembered nothing of that. And since Dora's death Christmas had been a sad day to Karl Metzerott; a day which he spent as quietly as possible, avoiding merry-making, and keeping Louis to himself, quite out of hearing of any mention of the feast or its occasion. But, however feasible this plan of operations might have hitherto proved, at five and a half, Louis was not to be so disposed of.

"Papa," he said, fetching his little stool with an air that meant business, and seating himself so as to gaze into his father's face, with large, serious eyes, "papa, what is Christmas ?"

"Who told you anything about it ?" asked the man, a little uneasily, seeing before him the dilemma of Christmas gayeties on the one hand, or disappointment to Louis on the other; both of which he felt equally unwilling to accept.

"It was Herr Martin," said Louis. "He said you were a free-thinker, who would let your boy have no Christmas."

"Your mother was buried on Christmas Day, Louis, and I do not care, therefore, to laugh and be merry on that day. But Jeweller Martin may mind his own business," he added angrily.

"Then do people laugh and be merry on Christmas ? What *is* Christmas, papa ?"

"A bit of nonsense, Louis, that you and I are too wise for. Come, I'll tell you all about it. It's only an old fairy tale, anyway, and you like fairy tales."

"*Ja, wohl!*" said the child, with brightening eyes. "I like them so much."

"Well, they say that once upon a time the world was very wicked, and the Christ-child came to save it. He was born on Christmas, and, when he grew up, preached to the people, and told them to repent and be good; but, instead of that, the rich men of those days took him and killed him. That part of the story is true, Louis; but the foolish part is this. Herr Martin's little boy, and George, and all the children about here, believe that the Christ-child is still alive in some place they call heaven; and that he comes every Christmas Eve, and fills their shoes with candy and toys, and such stuff."

"Oh!" Louis gave a long sigh. "And he don't, really?" he asked wistfully.

"Really? No. How could he? The fathers and mothers fill the shoes, and then lie about it to the children." He paused for a moment, as the vision rose in his heart of those two little white socks, and his wife's eyes, as she looked up at him, smiling, on her knees beside them, to complain that they were so small that *nothing* would go in. "I don't say but it's a pretty story," he added hastily, "but I've never told you a lie yet, Louis."

"I — I — wish," said the boy, "I wish it wasn't a lie, papa."

"Ah! so do I, Louis. But, such as the Herr Christ, if he had come at all on *that* Christmas Eve, it would have been to cure your poor mother. He would never have let her die, if he had been what they say he is."

Louis made no answer. This reasoning was entirely beyond him; but he sat very still on his little stool, with his hands folded, and a lonely, *lost* look on his sweet face, that went to Metzerott's heart.

"Come," he said, with rough tenderness, "I'll tell you something far better than to have your shoes filled by anybody. Be a little *Christ-kind* yourself, and carry gifts to other people."

He had struck the right chord. Louis' face beamed at once.

"I've got a quarter," he said eagerly.

They were soon deep in the discussion of ways and means; for there were many to receive, and little to give with; but as the main object was to give Louis pleasure, and as he knew little of intrinsic values, he would be satisfied to give, however small the gift.

"As for the Miss Prices," said Metzerott, "I've got a Christmas gift planned out for them, Louis; and to-morrow afternoon" (which was Sunday), "you ask Miss Polly to dress you in your best, and we'll go and see about it."

It proved to be worth seeing about.

The janitor of the Männerchor Club House, who was a saving man, and had, besides, good work and excellent pay in a factory in Micklegard, had resolved to try his luck on a sheep ranch in Texas, the owner of which had lately died, leaving a widow, who was willing to sell out land, stock, and fixtures on easy terms. The janitor had enough money to pay the first instalment, and his and his family's expenses to Texas; but the widow wanted him to come on at once and take charge, as was, indeed, highly necessary for the welfare of the sheep, and he was bound to the Männerchor until June, their bargain being for a year at a time.

Now, the janitor's salary was a small affair in itself; but the perquisites included the use of the ground floor of the club house as a dwelling. This ground floor had originally been a store, of tolerable proportions, and had been simply partitioned off, when the building was bought by the Männerchor, to suit the new use to which it was to be put. There was a kitchen in the rear, small but alterable, and Metzerott had visions of alterations before his mind's eye.

It will be remembered that at the Kaffee Klatsch, already described, supper was furnished to the convives at the modest price of fifteen cents a head. It had been experimentally proven that this rather more than covered expenses, even though the viands were ordered ready prepared from a baker, who of course made his own profit upon them. At the numerous concerts and balls which took place in the Hall, the supper cost usually a quarter, this sum, it was to be inferred, also leaving a margin for profit.

Now the duties of the janitor might be divided into two classes; he had to take care of the club-house, and keep it in order, and also attend to the fires and lights whenever it was used by the society, or other parties to whom it, or any part of it, might be rented for an evening. The first of these functions was usually performed by the janitor's wife, while the second, being better suited to a masculine capacity, the janitor reserved for himself. It seemed, therefore, to Karl Metzerott's logical mind, that, as these duties were already divided, it was not an absolute necessity that they who performed them should be man and wife; and his plan was to establish the Prices in the janitor's quarters with the care of the house, and also as caterers to the club, by which, in addition to the business they had already got together, he thought they could make a very comfortable living.

As for the janitor's other duties, Karl had a candidate for them in the person of Franz Schaefer, the pastor's eldest son, now nearly seventeen. Franz, it appeared, was a musical genius, and was working hard at his violin, under the care of the Herr Direktor of the Männerchor. The pastor, however, had no spare dollars wherewith to further his son's musical education; and, though the Direktor's lessons might be given for the pure love of art, and perhaps of humanity, at least of such human beings as could detect the difference between E sharp and F natural, dollars were required to convey him to the land of his dreams, the summit of his aspirations, — the Royal Conservatory at Stuttgart.

Meanwhile, the denied wish was bearing good fruits in the economy and self-denial which were becoming a part of his nature. He was a clerk in a small drug store at a smaller salary, and the additional income that Karl's plan would secure would set him considerably forward on the way to his promised land. Yet the plan was certainly an innovation; and perhaps Karl would not have been so successful in introducing it, but that the managers had a difficulty of their own, which the proposed arrangement met and satisfied. For houses in Micklegard were rented by the year; and it was hard, on the spur of the moment, to find a man, with a family, ready to give up his own domicile, and take the janitor's place. And, on the other hand, they were large-minded men, who, having carved out their own fortunes, were reluctant to stand in the light of any one who was trying to rise in the world; so that Karl's insistence, combined with the janitor's eagerness to be off, finally carried the day, and, on the Sunday afternoon already referred to, he and Louis returned with a promise from the managers to give the new plan a trial, at all events.

"Let them have it until the end of the year, that is, till 'moving day,' the secretary had said; "then we can see how it works."

"Work!" said Sally Price, "of course it'll work! It *shall* work."

Fortunately, the furniture of their new abode belonged to the house, having been put in for the departing janitor, who had taken the position as a fresh and furnitureless arrival from Germany; so there was nothing requiring an immediate outlay of capital.

Dr. Richards came in while they were discussing ways and means, and, after signifying his hearty approval of the plan in its main features, asked, "But about the balls, Miss Sally? Of course we know the society itself is composed of men who are as steady as old Time," with a roguish glance at Metzerott, "but at the public balls, you know! for they do have beer!"

"I know that, and I don't say I like it," replied Sally; "but firstly, *I* ain't going to sell it, I can't control it, and therefore I ain't responsible for it; secondly, they'll be in the top of the house and us at the bottom most of the time; thirdly, if they go beyond the bounds of reason, we can call on the police; fourthly, 'tain't no worse for us than it was for the janitor's wife, a nice, modest woman as ever I see; and fifthly, folks that have been through what we have can put up with 'most anything!"

"After that array of argument I have no more to say," said the doctor, laughing. "Well, Miss Sally, I must say that I think you will fill a long-felt want. You know the new pottery is to open the first of January, and quite a number of women would and could get work there if it were not for their duties at home. Now, if you could give them home fare at home prices, you see you would benefit yourselves and them too."

"How about their children?" asked Polly.

"The big ones would be at school most of the time, and if you had a *crèche* for the babies" —

"There's a vacant house next door to the hall," said Metzerott.

"Ah! now we have plans indeed," laughed the doctor, "and I wish I had time to talk them over with you; but I must perform my own special errand. Mr. Metzerott, my wife wants to borrow your little boy for our Christmas tree." Karl's eyes beamed with pride, yet he hesitated; but Louis' cheeks were flushed, his eyes large and bright.

"Oh!" he said, "what is a Christmas tree?"

"Now ain't that a shame! beggin' your pardon, Mr. Metzerott," said Miss Sally. "To think of the true Christian his mother was, and there's her boy don't know nothin' of Christmas or Christmas trees."

"Only, unfortunately for your argument, Miss Sally, both Christmas and its Tree are pagan originally. The first was the feast of Yule, kept by our Teutonic ancestors; the second is the representative of the great ash-tree Ygdrasil, symbolizing the heaven and earth. The eagle that soared above it, watching with sleepless eye all that passed below," —

"Well, so He does," said Miss Sally.

"Pagan or not," said Metzerott, "I don't want my boy to be a Christian."

"I think you are wrong," said the doctor thoughtfully; "not that I believe in Christianity any more than you, begging pardon of our friends here."

"Christianity!" said Sally; "well, I ain't sure I believe in that myself; but I do believe in Christ."

"I congratulate you," said the doctor. "It's an innocent superstition, Metzerott; and, in a world of misery like this, why not let a child believe it, if it add to his happiness?"

"Because it ain't true," said the shoemaker sturdily.

"My good friend," said Dr. Richards, "what *is* truth? Things are true relatively, never absolutely. I defy you to mention a single absolute truth."

"The sun shines," said Metzerott, whose Teutonic mind caught fire at the barest hint of metaphysics.

"How do you know it does?"

"Because I see it."

"Prove that to a man born blind."

"A man born blind is like a lunatic, or an idiot, as far as the sunlight is concerned," said Karl, after some thought; "it can't be proved to him. He can feel it though," he added.

"Ah! concurrent testimony! But that is only an aggregation of single testimony, that is of relative truths, and merely amounts to a high probability, not to an absolute truth."

"Well," said Metzerott, "until you bring me a man with all his senses complete, and stand him in the sunshine before me, and have him say it ain't bright and ain't warm, I think it's as near to an absolute truth as you are likely to come."

"As near, yes, I grant that. But come, suppose *I* tell you — having all my senses complete — that to me the sunshine is dark and cold; what would you say then?"

"I know what I'd like to *do*," said Karl Metzerott.

Now, to let the reader into a secret, the doctor had been all along amusedly aware of the similarity between this argument and certain others he had, in his student days, carried on. The reference to personal experience was therefore intentionally made, and he was much elated to find the shoemaker take his stand upon doing, instead of quibbling as to the exact meaning of shining and heat, or the state of mind a man must be in to experience these.

"Well, what would you do?" he asked.

"I'd wait for the Fourth of July," said the shoemaker grimly; "and then I'd stand you out there, before my door, till you dropped with a sunstroke."

"Without my hat?" asked the doctor.

Karl nodded, and the two men broke into a roar of laughter, which effectually settled the question of Louis and the Christmas Tree; for Karl was too pleased with his victory to be unrelenting.

"Now there is a man," said the doctor to himself as he drove home, "who believes with all his heart that the sun shines. He proved it, too. If I could meet a man who believed like that in the Bible! But there is nothing corresponding to that sunstroke test of his in theology; and Christians know it. I — yes, really — I almost wish there were. Pooh! what a fool I am! Get up!" Which energetic reminder, addressed to his horse, so quickened that quadruped's movements as to land the doctor speedily at his own door.

CHAPTER XI.

YGDRASIL.

It was easy for little Louis to accept the story of the Christ-child as a fairy tale; his life was so full of marvels this Christmas-tide. It was a drop of bitterness, of course, that George had not been asked to accompany him to Freddy's Tree; but, to say the truth, George was not a particularly refined or attractive-looking child. He was large for his age, and heavily built; slow of speech and movement, with whitish hair, pale blue eyes, and features inchoate, of a modelling seemingly unfinished. There were not wanting signs and tokens that George might develop into a fine man; but at the moment he was unattractive, and Alice had not reached the point of choosing her guests on the broad ground of a common humanity. Indeed she was not prevented, either by common humanity or the further consideration of kinship, from reflecting with a secret glee, which she was careful not to reveal to her husband, that the presence of Louis, the shoemaker's son, would only be condoned by the remainder of her guests because he was still — only a baby.

For Alice had bidden, not only the Garyulies and the Joblillies, but also the Grand Panjandrum himself with the little round button at top.

"Of course," said Mrs. Henry Randolph, "you have a right to ask whom you please to your own house, and the child is only a baby, too young to presume, *at present*," with awful emphasis; "but I am sorry to see you infected by the levelling tendencies of the age. Do you not know that even in heaven there are distinctions of rank ? "

" I don't know anything about it," said Alice.

" Why, I'm sure we read of Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, and Powers."

" And I suppose the Thrones decline to call on the Dominions, and the Principalities speak of the Powers as 'that sort of people,' " said Alice. " Jennie, if I believed as you do, I'd — well, I'd rather be a heathen."

" I hope you never may be a heathen, my dear" —

" Oh ! come, you're both right and both wrong. People who argue always are," interposed the hearty, jovial voice of Mr. Randolph. He was a tall, fine-looking man, with clear brown eyes, remarkably keen, and rather lacking in tenderness, but of a certain restless quickness as they swept from one face to another. His features were regular, and his manner genial, while his laugh was equal to that immortal one of Scrooge's nephew. Henry Randolph was a man of enormous popularity, and so trusted by his friends that even the knowledge that he had availed himself of the terms of his father's will to keep back his sister's portion did not shake their faith. He must have such good reasons, they said.

In truth, his reasons were of the very best. He was a man who speculated largely, and for the most part successfully; but, just at the time of Alice's marriage, his losses had been so heavy that to resign the control of such a large amount would have been to him financial ruin, while, with it at his command, he could in a short time make good his loss. The temptation to refuse his consent to the marriage, and thus make the money legally his, was doubled by his real objection to Dr. Richards as an irreligious man, whose views upon social and political matters were also open to exception. He honestly wished his sister to accompany the family abroad, as, even if her marriage were not thereby definitely broken off, it would at least be deferred sufficiently long to serve his purpose financially.

Now, of all this Frederick Richards was perfectly aware; that is, he knew — as every one did — of the sudden collapse of the scheme which crippled Mr. Randolph, and swallowed whole innumerable smaller fortunes, and, through some murmur of the reeds such as betrayed King Midas' secret, learned that Henry Randolph was a loser to a large amount. But to Alice the doctor said nothing; only, when the family returned to Micklegard, and the offer was made to let bygones be bygones, and restore to Alice the fortune her father had left her, Dr. Richards quietly refused.

Why?

It is hard to make his motives comprehensible to those who regard wealth as the supreme good.

The grandfather of Henry and Alice Randolph had made his fortune by means which, even in that day and generation, were regarded with scorn and horror. He was a slave-trader; but his only daughter, surrounded by luxury and educated at a Northern school, never suspected by what iniquitous means her wealth was acquired. To her, her father had always been the man he had become after his runaway marriage with the daughter of an aristocratic family, and his purchase of an estate in the far South, — handsome, jovial, and, to her, always tenderly indulgent. Her marriage to a representative of one of the "old families" strengthened her belief in herself as one of the chosen few for whose benefit the world was made and ordered; and her husband did *not* behold in the pearls and rubies upon his bride's fair neck the blood and tears of suffering human beings, though somewhat distressfully aware of the not over-creditable manner in which his father-in-law had "made his money." A convenient term this of "*making* money," by the by. One might call it the great nineteenth-century *petitio principii;* for what a man makes might certainly be considered as his by all social and moral laws, while that which he merely acquires is suggestive of all sorts of confusing possibilities. Yet, if he makes, of what does he make, and whence came his material? Unless he makes also that, can he be said really to own the thing finally produced?

All which would have appeared to Henry Randolph very empty and unprofitable speculation, — mere sound, signifying nothing. Certainly, if one had accused him of insensibility to such suffering as he did not actually see, there are few of us who could afford to cast a stone at him; and he would have said of himself that to cases of real distress his heart and purse were always open; yet, to Frederick Richards's mind, an invisible, semi-tangible hardness, under the manufacturer's generous, cordial exterior, was always accounted for and excused by his grandfather's occupation. That his own Alice had, as he firmly believed, escaped such a core to her loving heart (like the earth's inmost hypothetical solid centre), was a freak of heredity for which he did not profess to be able to account. Yet, even Alice did not entirely concur in her husband's opinion about the fortune, as was indeed most natural. She yielded to his feeling upon the matter; but her own was by no means what it would have been had the fruit of speculation been "lifted" bodily from a bank vault, or the slave-trader's chattels been of pure Caucasian parentage. Also the money would have been in many ways a convenience, and, in case of "anything happening" to herself or the doctor, would have given her an ease of mind in regard to Freddy, which she was by no means able to derive from the thought of an overruling Providence.

What Henry Randolph thought of his brother-in law, we had better not inquire; what he said was this, —

"Well, it's his own affair; and if he can afford to despise such a sum of money, he is better off than I am," which in a sense was true, since Dr. Richards had as much as he wanted.

The amount in question, however, was carefully "left" to Alice in her brother's will, he being, according to his lights, a just man, whenever speculation would allow him; and, meanwhile, the two families were on studiously cordial terms, and were assembled on Christmas Eve to hail the lighting of the tree Ygdrasil.

It was Dr. Richards who told the story before the doors were opened, with Freddy in his arm-chair beside him, Frank and Harry Randolph on the floor at his feet, Louis in the place of honor on his knee, and Pinkie leaning forward from her father's arms to listen. Pinkie, alias Rosalie, alias Pink Rosebud, was a wilful little maiden not three years old. She had the dark clear skin, brown eyes, and chestnut curls of the Randolphs, and bore indeed so strong a resemblance to Freddy, that her brilliant color and strong, active limbs sent many a pang to his parents' hearts. But there was no envy in the pain, and the child was well-nigh as dear to both as if she had been their own.

The boys were comparatively very unimportant members of the Randolph household. Mrs. Randolph was what is called an excellent mother, and brought up her boys very strictly, and without petting or indulgence. Therefore they were best described collectively, at least in her presence, where there was little to distinguish them, except that Frank had taken a line of his own in being fair and blue-eyed. For the rest, both were painfully shy, silent, and awkward, though well-looking and well-dressed.

Little Louis, on the other hand, was perhaps too young to be shy, or perhaps had lived too freely and happily with his father to dread the criticism of his elders. At all events, as he sat on the doctor's kind knee, and heard of the dragon Nidhug and the beautiful Nornas, and the golden and silver fruit of the great world-tree, there was nothing in his sparkling eyes, nothing in his sweet, childish face and neat, becoming dress, to indicate that the Nornas had been otherwise than kindly disposed at his birth.

Freddy and he had taken to each other at once.

"Can't you walk one bit?"

"Haven't you any mamma at all?" they had asked; and then the fair, rosy face and the pale, dark one had met and kissed each other.

After the gifts had been distributed and compared, there was singing of Christmas carols; for all the Randolphs had fine musical and artistic talent, and the boys forgot themselves and their mother's presence more readily in music than in any other employment or amusement. Harry, indeed, was the leading soprano of the choir to which both belonged; and as all gathered around the piano, where Alice presided, they were a perfect picture of a happy, united, and religious family. And these are some of the words that they sang: —

"It came upon the midnight clear,
  That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
  To touch their harps of gold.
'Peace on the earth, good-will to men,
  From Heaven's all-gracious King,'
The world in solemn stillness lay
  To hear the angels sing.

But with the woes of sin and strife
  The world has suffered long,
Beneath the angel strain have rolled
  Two thousand years of wrong;
And man at war with man hears not
  The love-song that they bring;
Oh! hush the noise, ye men of strife,
  And hear the angels sing.

And ye, beneath life's crushing load
  Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
  With painful steps and slow,
Look now ! for glad and golden hours
  Come swiftly on the wing.
Oh, rest beside the weary road,
  And hear the angels sing !

For lo ! the days are hastening on,
  By prophet bards foretold,
When with the ever-circling years
  Comes round the age of gold ;
When Peace shall over all the earth
  Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song
  Which now the angels sing."

"What a tissue of rotten lies Christianity is!" thought Dr. Richards (who could not sing), leaning in his favorite attitude upon the mantel-piece, and listening to Henry Randolph's fine bass, as it bore up the flute-like notes of his son. "There is Randolph, now, by a turn of his pen to-morrow will make 'life's crushing load' heavier, maybe, to hundreds, and his own pockets heavier at the same time, and then will square accounts with his conscience by giving fifty dollars to some charity. Faugh!"

But at this moment an exclamation from Mrs. Randolph interrupted him. Louis and Pinkie, while the singing was under way, had got together into a corner, where they were discovered to be embracing one another in a very pretty baby fashion.

"But I tisses F'eddy," observed Pinkie.

"It is very different," remarked Mrs. Randolph. "Freddy is your cousin; but this little boy is no relation, and is besides in quite a different state of life."

"Fut is state of life?" asked Pinkie. "Is it tause he tan yun ayound and F'eddy tant?"

"You'll understand when you are older, dear," said her mother; but whether Pinkie would have been satisfied with this answer was rendered forever doubtful by the announcement of the carriage.

"Good-by, child," said the great lady, patting Louis' golden head; "I wish you every good fortune that is proper for you to have. I was your mother's best friend, if she had only known it, and would have saved her from the misery that afterwards, in the righteous Providence of God, overtook her."

"What is misery?" asked little Louis, wistfully; "is it dying? My papa says she died 'cause we was poor, and the millionnaires wouldn't 'vide. Are you a millionnaire, and would you 'vide?"

"Quite a promising young Socialist," observed Mr. Randolph. "His father must be a dangerous man."

But Louis did not hear him; he was listening eagerly to the lady.

"My dear, life and death are the gift of God. Your mother broke his laws, and he punished her" —

"Jennie! Jennie! don't speak so to the child."

"He should hear it from some one, Alice, and there is no one else likely to tell him. Heaven knows how kindly I feel towards poor Dora, but I dare not palliate her sin. 'Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers' are the words of Scripture, and poor Dora has paid the penalty for disregarding them; happier so than if she had seen her sin visited upon *others*."

"Jennie, my dear Jennie, indeed the horses will catch their death; you forget how cold it is," cried her husband, in an agony.

Doctor Richards saw them gravely to the door, then returned to the parlor, where Alice, with white lips, was restlessly putting chairs in place, and tidying books and ornaments; and Louis was standing where he had been left, with flushed face and clinched baby hands.

"If God killed my mamma," said Louis, as the doctor entered, "then I hate God!"

"Hush, Louis," said the doctor. "I must take you home, little boy. After all, Alice, it don't do to mix — states of life."

"It would, if people were human," she said in a stifled voice.

"Ah!" he said; "but some people are only — millionnaires."

"Is God a millionnaire?" asked Louis, as they drove away.

"Mrs. Randolph thinks so," said the doctor; "but there's no such person, Louis, it's all a myth — that is, a fairy-tale."

"I fink everyfing is a fairy-tale," said Louis to himself with a sigh of relief; "and I'm glad about it, too; for it's nice to be a Christ-child, but I don't want to be God and kill people."

When Dr. Richards returned he found Alice waiting for him in his study. Freddy, she said, had dropped asleep at once, after the evening's fatigue.

"I am glad," said the doctor; "I feared the excitement might keep him awake."

"Yes," she said, and then, suddenly, all the storm within her broke forth.

"Fred," she cried, "help me! Is there a God? and is he so cruel? Would he punish my child for his mother's sin?"

"My dear," he said very gently, "why ask me? you know my opinion on these matters. And you have no very high esteem for Mrs. Randolph that her words should have such weight."

"It is my own conscience!" she cried wildly. "Fred, I will tell you even though it will give you pain. It has rung in my ears night and day, 'The sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children.'"

"Poor little girl," he said tenderly, stroking her hair. "I hoped at least, Alice, that your religion made you happier."

"My religion! mine! Oh! what *is* my religion! I feel like little Louis, Fred, that I hate" —

"Hush!" he said, "you will be sorry presently, when this excitement has passed away. Go to bed, like a good girl, and forget it all."

"If I only could!" she sighed; "but I won't pray, Fred; I can't, to a God of punishment."

He did not reply, except by a kiss, but, when the door had closed behind her, smiled a little bitterly.

"The mystery of pain," he thought, "she said we should solve it together, hoping all the while to convert me, as I knew very well. And her solution is, a God of punishment!"

He turned up his reading-lamp and took up the latest medical treatise, which, though it recommended very harsh remedies, he did not decline to believe in.

Dr. Richards was a devotee of physical science, not a philologist, and it therefore did not occur to him that, etymologically, Punishment is much the same word as Purification.

CHAPTER XII.

"O YE ICE AND SNOW, BLESS YE THE LORD!"

LOUIS was awake bright and early on that Christmas morning, though, as applied to the atmospheric conditions of that particular day, "bright" is a singularly inappropriate adjective. The snow fell, not merely in flakes, but in clouds, and whether "the opposite side of the street" was "over the way," or in Farther India, was purely a matter of faith; to the eye it was perfectly invisible.

"I don't see how you are to get even as far as next door with those things," said Metzerott, half in earnest, looking first at Louis, then at the blinding storm.

"Oh! but, papa, I must take George and Frau Anna their presents," cried Louis in dismay.

"I don't see why you *must*," said his father. "Fritz will be in after his breakfast in a few minutes; he can take them."

Louis looked very grave; he turned and took up his picture of the Christ-child. It was prettily framed, and the inscription, with its letters of red, blue, and gold, encircled it like a glory. Alice had used German letters and the German version.

"Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe, und Friede auf Erden, und den Menschen ein Wohlgefallen."

"I could not be a Christ-kind if Fritz took them in," he said.

Sally Price, who was busy over the frying-pan, while

Polly stirred up the bread-sponge for the daily baking, which, as they had three families to provide for, might not be omitted, even on Christmas Day, — Sally Price dropped her iron spoon and held up her hands.

"Well, if I ever did!" she said. "Do you want to be a Christ-child, you angel?"

"Papa said I might, and Dr. Richards said, last night, the little boy in the picture looked like me, and I must try to be like him."

"Law!" interposed Susan, "I thought the doctor was one of these infidels."

"Infidel or not," said Miss Sally, "he acts like a mighty good Christian."

"But talkin' like that, Sister Sally" —

"Talk! anybody can *talk:* and infidels often talk louder than Christians, about imitatin' the Saviour, and such like. I s'pose they think nobody can keep 'em up to it, if they don't want to be kep'; while a member of the Church daren't say much, for fear of folks sayin' he has back-slid if he don't live up to it."

"Can't I go, papa?" asked Louis, to whom the foregoing had been simply wasted breath.

"Of course, my son. I will carry you myself. We will show the good church members two more infidels who can keep up to their word without being kept."

"It's just awful to think of that child being brought up to believe like that," said Polly as she covered her sponge and set it away to rise.

"Well, 'tis and 'taint, Polly," answered Sally thoughtfully. "First place, he's one of them children which of such is the kingdom of Heaven, and the good Lord will take care of his own; and, second, how better could he be raised than to want to be a little Christ-child, and ready to cry if he's told he can't?"

"But he thinks it is all a fairy-tale."

"As it were," said Sally. "What's the difference between fairy-tale and history, Polly Price, to a baby five years old?"

"But when he gets older, Aunt Sally" —

"You take my advice, Polly, don't you never cross a bridge till you come to it. If the good Lord don't take care of him when he gets older, it'll be time for you to interfere. Now, ketch hold and rench out Mrs. Rolf's coffee-pot, will you? and I'll pour the coffee into it. And if them pork chops ain't done to a turn, I lose my guess. Cream gravy, too, for a treat for Christmas!"

"Last Christmas," said Susan, "we had nothing to eat but the heel of a loaf, so hard we soaked it in water before we could bite into it."

Sally stood for a moment with misty eyes; her volubility was gone on this subject. Then, as a sound of feet stamping off snow was heard at the door, she said with fervor, "*Good* Lord!" and fell to work upon the business in hand.

The next moment Metzerott hurried in with Louis on his shoulder, and followed by Fritz Rolf, a bright-faced boy of eight, with much of his mother's briskness and "faculty."

"I've cleared a path," said Fritz; "and, if it lasts till I get back, I'll get this breakfast in a-hootin'. But I tell *you* it's snowing! Cover everything up warm, Aunt Sally, or Jacky Frost will stick his nose into it. Coffee, taters, pork, and hot biscuit! Bully! Ta! ta! see you later."

"You're a-goin' to see me right now," said Sally dryly. "S'pose you can open the front door yourself? Not with that tray in your hands, less'n you want to play the fall of Troy with it."

As she opened the front door of the shop carefully, to exclude as much, or rather admit as little, as possible of the snowy air, those in the kitchen heard her exclaim, "Dr.

Richards! if ever I seen a snow image! Your very eyelashes is white! Jump off and get warm, do!"

"I wasn't at all sure of my whereabouts, Miss Sally," answered the doctor's voice, "until you spoke. But for my horse's better judgment, I should have lost my way a dozen times — a hundred times — between this and Oak Grove."

He had sprung from his horse as he spoke, and was shaking the snow from a blanket strapped military fashion behind his saddle, wherewith to cover the steaming animal.

"Oak Grove! the land! You ain't been twelve miles in this storm?"

"Sent for at midnight," said the doctor, shaking off vigorously the snow adhering to his person before he entered the shop. "Old patient, and a matter of life and death; so I had to go."

"Well, I hope it turned out life, to pay you for your trouble."

"I think it will be; she is safe for the present, at all events," he said, very quietly, but with a smile from under his fur cap, which Sally never forgot.

Just at this moment a centaur-like figure loomed up through the snow, and halted at the sound of their voices.

"Is that you, doctor? They told me at your house to ride out along the road to Oak Grove, and I might meet you. What luck that I took this street!"

"Mr. Randolph! What has happened?"

"It's my wife, doctor, my poor wife! I don't know if she will be alive when we get there. I would not trust any one but myself to come for you in this storm."

"A poor compliment to human nature," thought Dr. Richards, "and a bitter commentary on the happiness of the rich. Metzerott, here, could find twenty to serve him in such a strait; but they are not hirelings."

Perhaps twenty self-devoted friends was rather a large proportion for even a poor man; but Dr. Richards had been four hours on the road, and was nearly frozen, so his exaggeration may be forgiven, especially as he was on his horse before the reflection had passed through his mind.

At the first sound of Mr. Randolph's voice, Sally had re-opened the shop door, which she had closed behind her, and called out, "Cup o' coffee, Polly; be spry!" and as the doctor was about to ride away, there it was at his elbow, black, fragrant, and steaming hot. He swallowed it hastily, though he said afterwards that he could have dallied over every spoonful, like an old maid over her afternoon tea, so good it tasted. Then he disappeared with Henry Randolph into the storm.

The coffee would have been doubly relished had Dr. Richards known it would be his sole physical support and sustenance until noon of the same day. He had sent his tired horse home by a man-servant immediately upon reaching Mr. Randolph's; but it was late in the afternoon before Alice, who had been watching anxiously, saw him walk wearily up the street towards the house. She had the door open before he reached it. The snow-storm had ceased, in consequence of a sudden fall in the temperature, and the brilliant sunshine on the white garment of Mother Earth, which the rude, irreverent wind was tossing in huge folds hither and thither, seemed to trouble the doctor's eyes; for Alice noticed that he shaded them with his hand as he came towards her, and that they had a strained, dazed expression when he had entered the study, into which, with many loving words, she tenderly drew him.

"You walked home, dear! How imprudent! I sent John to ask if you wanted the buggy."

"I sent him on to Dr. Harrison, who took my rounds for me to-day—happily, for I am fit for nothing now. One of Harrison's horses is laid up, and the other is not able for double work such weather as this."

"It is frightfully cold, and — oh, my darling! what a condition you are in!"

"Well," said the doctor philosophically, "when a man has had snow drifting down the back of his neck and his boots, and settling everywhere about his person that it lawfully could settle, for about fourteen hours, and then it has melted and dried on him, he has a right to be in a condition."

"I am afraid he will have a right to be ill if he keeps up that sort of thing," said Alice. "But how is poor Jennie? Henry was in a terrible way about her this morning, but I have seen her in so many of these attacks" —

"Just so," said the doctor; "poor soul, I suppose it was this one coming on that made her so — ah — captious — last night. I had very little hope of her from the moment I reached her bedside; but one comfort is that she had everything done for her that medical science could suggest. Harrison was with her in less than half an hour after she was taken, and stayed till I got there."

"Is she — why, Fred, you talk as if — she can't be *dead!*"

"She died about an hour ago, Alice. I would not let them send you any message, for, knowing how it would shock you, I wished to bring the news myself."

Alice made no reply, but stood white and still, her hands hanging clasped before her, gazing into the fire. She could find no tear for the unloved sister-in-law, there was no grief at her heart for the loss of one so antagonistic; but the shock of her death was all the more sudden and terrible. For Alice was quite conscious of the crisis in her spiritual life that had been revealed to her on the preceding night, to which, as to all crises, physical and psychological, she had been long unconsciously drawing near.

In truth, Alice's religion had never been to her nearly so real as the love she bore to her husband; there had been nothing between her and the Invisible, approaching or corresponding to the unfailing sympathy, the wordless comprehension and support, she found in him. Her love was real — her religion an unconscious make-believe; and reality had conquered.

Upon her realization that the creed she had learned had grown all unreal to her (that it had never been other than unreal she was not yet wise enough to know), Mrs. Randolph's sudden passing away into the unknown came as a lightning stroke to her own house of life. Nothing else could have shown her so clearly the change in her own creed, as this death, so near herself, yet with no loving grief to hide the sharp surprise, the sudden vacancy. She was utterly silent; indeed, what was she to say? the usual platitudes had become so unutterably meaningless.

"She is better off," — but Alice knew nothing whatever about it. "I hope she is happy!" "I trust she died at peace with God." "May she rest in peace," — none of these phrases would come to her lips. Only there rose before her mind a sudden sense of the dark unknown into which that soul had gone out; was it indeed to annihilation?

She turned suddenly, and put out both hands to her husband; her eyes had a frightened, lost look.

"Fred," she cried, "what is death? is this life *all?* Shall we lose each other utterly one day, you and I? Is there *nothing* beyond the grave?"

He took her in his arms, it was all he could do for her in her sore need.

"I don't know, my darling," he said; "if there be, science has no power to find it. We must only love each other all the more while we live."

"But why?" she cried, "what good will that do? it will only add to the misery of the one who is left behind. What is the use of love? or of living? unless we could die together."

"There are others," he said, "whom we can help. We may live for them."

"And what claim have they upon us? If there is nothing beyond the grave, why not make the journey thither as short as possible, at least for the wretched? There is Freddy, for example, who has to suffer so much; if it is right to give him a little morphine to ease his pain for a while, why would it be wrong to give him enough to ease it forever?"

"Fortunately, there is no fear of your carrying that theory into practice," he said, trying to smile.

"Because I am selfish," she replied, "and cannot part with my child sooner than I must. But, Fred, there must be some truth somewhere; why should we not look for it together? There are books."

"That is the hopeless part about it," he answered; "there are so many books, and all so positive on their own side of the question. The theologian will prove to you just as clearly the whole scheme of salvation, as he calls it, as the scientist that nothing but matter has any real existence. For my part, there are two arguments which to me are perfectly conclusive. I ask nothing further. Whether there is or is not some sort of Blind Power in the universe, such as the great First Cause that some scientists are willing to acknowledge, does not interest me; but of the non-existence of an all-knowing, all-loving, personal God I am perfectly convinced for two reasons. First, the existence of evil in all its forms: sin, sorrow, suffering, and death. *I* would not allow such things in a world under my control, and a God who is less merciful than I is no God at all — for me."

"I remember," she said softly, "I have always known you thought like that."

"But my second reason," he continued, "is, if possible, even stronger. Here are you and I — yes, Alice, I too — who would give our very lives to believe in God and immortality. How are we to do it? To examine all the evidence, for and against, would take a lifetime of incessant study; and even those who have given this — beginning, too, with far more learning than we possess — have reached widely different conclusions. Well may the Book of Job say, 'Canst thou by searching find out God?' but the author, whoever he was, failed to draw the conclusion that, if there were a God he would not so have hidden himself."

"I suppose you are right; at least, I don't see how to answer you. But, surely, Fred, there is a great deal in the Bible about the truth being easy to find. All through the Old Testament it is the Jews who are turning away from God, and he who pleads with them to return; and in the New it says that God has hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes; and that only those who become as little children can enter into the kingdom of heaven."

"That is, only those who crush down the intellect and believe blindly," he said bitterly. "I can find no faith on those terms, Alice; let me meet annihilation, if I must, with my eyes open."

For another moment she clung to him, with her face hidden; then she looked up very pale, but calm.

"I can live without faith," she said quietly; "but I give you warning now, that without you and my child I could not and would not live. If death comes to me first, — well! if not" —

"You will live as long as there is any one for whom you can make the burden of life less heavy," he said, "and so will I so far as we can control our own fate. It has been all the creed I could boast of for many years, Alice, to say, 'I believe there are those whom I must live to help.' I give it to you, now, in return for that of which I have robbed you; take it for what it is worth."

"'I believe there are those whom I must live to help,'" she repeated slowly. "It is a better creed than poor Jennie's, Fred. 'I believe there are those whom I must live to help!'" A sudden light came to her eyes, a smile to her lips. "I will begin with you!" she cried. "Why, how abominably selfish I am, to keep you here talking theology, when you are tired to death and half starved, I dare say."

"My comforts are at least all ready for me," he answered, smiling, with a glance at the tempting meal upon the table, and the coffee-pot, and little dish of fried oysters keeping hot before the fire.

"I thought you would rather have your lunch here," she said. "Will you change your clothes first?"

"They seem to have pretty well dried on me," he answered, "but I shall feel better for a hot bath; I am chilled to the very bone. And, meanwhile, there is some one else, Alice, love, who will need your care. Your brother asked to send poor little Pinkie here for a few days, and of course I had no wish to refuse. You will not mind the trouble, I know. The carriage will be here in a few moments."

"Poor little Pinkie!" Alice's eyes filled with the first tears that she had shed for Mrs. Randolph. "No, no, she will not be a trouble; but I must tell Freddy." She paused, hesitated, and came back. "What shall I say to him, Fred? I can't tell him that his aunt has gone to heaven. I don't know that there is such a place."

"She has gone into the unknown," he replied; "but that would be nonsense to Freddy. I do not know what better name you can find, my dear, than just heaven. And if you don't believe in golden harps and a glassy sea, — well, neither do you put much faith in the country above the bean-stalk; yet you tell Freddy about that."

Alice went away, not quite satisfied, yet seeing no other course practically open to her than that suggested by her husband. It was a comfort that Freddy needed not now to be instructed in the nature or whereabouts of the Celestial Country. His small imagination took fire at once at the idea that Aunt Jennie had gone there; and he talked so eloquently to Pinkie of harps and crowns and angels with great white wings that, what with his conversation, and the pride and honor of paying a visit all alone, the little thing dried her tears for the mother whom she had been told she was never to see again, and was comforted until bedtime. But by bedtime Alice's hands were so full as to promise her every opportunity to put her new creed into action.

For Dr. Richards's hot bath had proved quite ineffectual to take the chill out of his bones. Alice found him sitting huddled over the fire, shivering with what he asserted to be only a nervous chill. He could not eat, but was insatiably thirsty, and said that his eyes bothered him; he supposed the snow had dazzled them. She tried vainly to persuade him to go to bed, until her persuasions were re-enforced by the positive orders of Dr. Harrison, who happened to come in. Before morning he was burning with fever, and tormented with all the worst agonies of inflammatory rheumatism.

Truly, it seemed that Mrs. Randolph had been right, and that an avenging God was punishing the faithless for their disloyalty to him. And yet how had this illness come? By spending and being spent for others; by rendering good for the evil rendered unto him. Has not Christ said, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto these, ye did it unto me"? Can he return evil for good?

Only a step of the way can our dull eyes see; and oftentimes that step is rough and hard, and to us looks very evil. But the evil shall pass away, the good remaineth.

It was strange what comfort and strength Alice found in her new creed, meagre though it were in comparison with the creeds of Christendom.

"I believe there are those whom I must live to help."

Simple and practical, at least.

Logical? well, no! The human mind is, fortunately, not supremely logical; fortunately, I say, considering the readiness wherewith it adopts premises whose sole logical conclusion would be worse than the Spanish Inquisition, or the hanging of the Salem witches. Dr. Richards's creed had come to his wife backed by the irresistible force of his life and character.

But neither of them reflected that in the verb, the little verb *must*, lay all they professed to deny, — an ordered universe and an ordering God.

CHAPTER XIII.

PROSIT NEUJAHR.

Sally Price had parted, in the storm and stress of life, with most of the superstitions wherewith she began the world; but there were two upon which she still retained a firm hold. One related to the new moon, which was to her a sign and token of good luck if seen over the right shoulder, or in full face in the open sky; while the left shoulder, or the obscuring branches of trees, brought, in some shape or other, misfortune. She always made a wish before she removed her eyes from the first sight of the new moon, holding up money, if her pocket happened to contain any of that commodity; but in this she had less faith, though she often referred to the fact that, the very last new moon before Polly's famous swoon, she, Sally, had shown the moon a silver dime, and had wished for something to do whereby they could keep from starving.

The other superstition was that New Year's Day foretold the year's complexion, whether sad or joyful. Not its atmospheric condition. Sally looked upon the weather as a matter of too slight importance to be capable of foretelling anything; but sick or sorry; penniless, cold, and hungry; busy, happy, rich, and glad, — as New Year's Day found her, so, in the main, would she be throughout the year.

They were foolish superstitions enough, I admit; yet Sally had infused something into them not utterly and ridiculously preposterous. For if, as she so humbly and faithfully believed, a Providence watches over the fall of the sparrow, why could not the same Providence foretell to her by the position of the moon and her own impecuniosity, or the reverse, and also by the events and circumstances of New Year's Day, His gracious will concerning her for the ensuing month or year? It was quite worth His while to comfort her with a little gleam of hope when help was at hand, or to give her time to prepare her mind if misfortune were approaching. And not for the world would she have waited to get the moon over her right shoulder before she looked up, or in any other way have tampered with the omen. It was certainly not her doing that they were to take possession of their new quarters in Männerchor Hall on Sylvester-Abend itself, or that the New Year was to open so brightly with a concert and ball; but it was not strange, but touching, how persistently she strove that Susan should be perfectly well by the eventful day.

"If you wasn't younger than me, Susan Price," she said, "I'd say you was in your dotage. Tired! What have you done to tire you, I'd like to know?"

"That's just where it is, Sally," her sister would answer meekly, "I ain't done nothin'; and yet I feel 's if I don't want to lift a finger, not if the house was afire."

"Well, don't lift a finger, then," Sally would reply. "There ain't no call for you to; and when the house ketches fire, I'll come and call you."

The truth was that Susan, who had never possessed Sally's vigor, either of mind or body, had been worn out by the bitterness of the struggle for existence, and had no strength to rally now that the worst of the battle was over. Dr. Richards had prescribed tonics — and paid for them himself — and had shaken his head gravely when he had left her.

"A total change of air, scene, and idea," he said privately to Karl Metzerott, "might possibly put new life into her;

but I doubt if she have sufficient elasticity of mind or body to make such a change possible. Set her down in the middle of Paris or London, and she would mentally carry Grind and Crushem and her sewing-machine along with her. She can't shake them off as her sister has done."

"Not till she moves to the graveyard," said Karl grimly; "that's the only change possible for her, I suppose."

"And she will piously believe that an All-Merciful God has sent her there! Well, poor soul, it's her only consolation; I would not rob her of it if I could."

"Which you couldn't, doctor. That's the queerest part of all the lot of rubbish. Those two women believe that the All-Merciful God you speak of has watched over them all their lives, as firmly as I believe you have just written that prescription. I cannot understand it."

"Nor I," said the doctor; "but there are so many things one cannot understand," he added, half to himself.

Did it ever occur to him now, as he lay upon his bed of pain, that an all-merciful, loving Father might be trying — even then — to teach him the lesson which Susan Price already had learned, — the lesson he could not understand?

The move on New Year's Eve brightened up poor Susan so as to cheer Sally wonderfully. They were busy all day arranging their new domicile; for they meant to use the front portion of the former shop as a dining-room, where those whom they supplied might, if they preferred, take their meals instead of having them sent home. They had already had an application from a young German girl who taught in the public schools, and had neither friends nor relatives in the city, and from one or two clerks in the various stores. Metzerott and Frau Anna, for a while at least, would provide for the conveyance of their own meals, though the former had plans and designs upon a house that stood next to the Hall, whereof he spoke not until the time should be ripe.

Besides their "moving and unpacking," as Sally jocularly called it, — for they had little to move but their three selves, — and the meals to prepare for their regular customers, there was the supper to be served at the ball that night, so it may be imagined that the Prices had their hands full. Franz Schaefer came around early "to help," as he said, in reality to look at Polly in the intervals of his proper business of attending to the fire and lights. He was now a tall, somewhat gawky youth of nearly seventeen, with his father's reddish hair standing up like a halo around an honest, open, but ugly countenance, which, lacking the pastor's nervous quickness, wore for its most constant expression a stolid impassibility. Only with his violin upon his shoulder did his face light up or change; but, with the soft touch of the electric wood against his cheek, the eyes grew soft and humid, a half-smile curved the corners of the rather heavy lips, and a slight color crept into his usually pale face.

Polly, who was three years his senior, laughed at the lad's devotion, and alternately petted and scolded him, like a mother. Franz submitted; but he had entirely made up his mind as to his own course.

"I mean to marry her if she will wait until I come back from Germany," he said to himself. "If she marries any one else, I will kill him like a mosquito."

Certainly, no one suspected such bloodthirsty designs in the quiet youth who lounged awkwardly against the door-post as the members of the Männerchor climbed, laughing and talking, up the steep winding staircase that led to the Concert Hall, most of them pausing to chaff "Janitor Franz," as they went by. Franz was not good at chaff; he never could think of anything clever enough to say until the occasion was past. Then he thought of a plenty, he said. Sometimes he confided some of the things he ought to have said to Polly, who laughed at him undisguisedly.

"If you were a soldier, Franz," she said, "you'd go after your ammunition just as the battle was beginning."

As usual Franz only grinned in reply, but later in the evening he suddenly exclaimed aloud, "Not if somebody I can imagine were on the other side."

Several persons standing by looked at him in surprise; but Franz did not deign to explain that the imaginary somebody was Polly's possible husband.

In truth Franz was not stupid, though the connection between his mind and tongue did not act as rapidly as might have been wished. But give him time and he could think as clearly and plan as well as anybody. And thus on this Sylvester Night it was beautiful to see how evident he made it to all men that Polly belonged to him. He surrounded her with his own family, of whom Tina, recently married, was his confidant, and highly approved his choice. The pastor was amused, but unconcerned, as at something belonging to a distant and improbable future; and Gretchen, who still held fast her own immunity from accident, was mildly sarcastic and coolly critical. Polly did not rebel; she liked the pastor's family, even to Lottie, now grown stouter than ever, and apt to drop asleep on very small provocation. Tina and Polly were fast friends; and, as for Franz himself, his devotion was too absurd for any sensible person to consider seriously.

It was the last hour of the old year, and "*Damenregiment*" was solemnly proclaimed by the Herr President. The ladies, he said, who for all the year had been under the rule of their lords and masters, for that one hour, were to have full sway. They were to ask, and their partners were not to refuse, to tread a measure devised for the total overthrow of the nobler sex. In the "Männerchor Cotillon" the dancers stood in a circle as in "Tucker." In the midst stood a table and chair, the former bearing favors and a nightcap. Up to this table each conqueror waltzed her chosen victim, and, either decorated him with a favor — in which case he waltzed her away again, — or — put the nightcap on his head. In which case, he naturally remained in his place until released by some more gracious Tänzerin.

Great was the fun and loud the laughter; many an old score was paid off by a specially unbecoming arrangement of that yellow tissue-paper cap, with its full white frill and long floating strings; many a shy old bachelor was hunted out from his refuge in the gallery, and made, as he keenly felt, a scorn and hissing in the sight of all men. Polly thoroughly enjoyed it. She chose the prettiest favor she could find for Karl Metzerott, who was her first partner, and who, simply to tease Franz, improved his opportunity to keep her to himself so long that not a few gossiping eyebrows went up in consequence. Polly, however, being filled with compassion at the sight of Franz chained, Andromeda-like, to that fatal chair (though when duly *capped* he rather resembled Medusa), raised him to the seventh heaven by releasing him.

"It must be nearly twelve," she said. "Ought not you to look after that dynamite bomb, or whatever it is, that is to explode the New Year in upon us?"

Franz grinned; this time his answer was all ready.

"I've got nothing to do with that," he said, "that's the president's business. They would not trust me, anyway; I'm too young. I know who I'm going to wish a happy New Year to, Miss Polly, first of anybody here."

"That's good," she said coolly, "who is it?"

"Ah! I won't tell, or she'd be running off," said the lad; "but if any fellow cuts in ahead of me, I'll throw him downstairs. Miss Polly, if I was to kiss her hand, you know, would she be mad at me?"

"Yes, I think she would," rejoined Polly. "There are my aunts, who have come up for the New Year wishes; it *must* be near twelve."

Sally and Susan had been busy in the kitchen over the supper, all the evening, but at this moment appeared in the doorway, to see the Old Year out and the New Year in, smiling and radiant in the new dresses which Frau Anna had made for them.

"Aunt Susan looks so very pale," said Polly uneasily, "I am afraid she has been working too hard. I ought to have stayed and helped them, but they were both so kind, and the music sounded so bright and cheering," —

"There was so little to do," said Franz, "the supper was mostly ready" —

At this moment something — perhaps a dynamite bomb, as Polly had said, — exploded on the stage, and Polly found her hand suddenly seized and kissed.

"*Prosit Neujahr!* Miss Polly," cried Franz; "I hope you may be as happy as I would like to make you."

Polly had no time to be angry; indeed she was half stunned by the "Prosits" and handshakings going on all around her. But through it all there rang all at once a shrill, grief-stricken cry.

"Not *now*, Susan! Oh! not *now*, when we were goin' to be so happy!"

For, amid the laughter and good wishes all around her, Susan Price had suddenly and quietly fainted away.

CHAPTER XIV.

LEARNING AND TEACHING.

FROM the swoon into which she had fallen on that New Year's Night Susan Price was slow in reviving. But it was nothing, she said, when she had at last regained consciousness; she was only stupid and tired. So the ball went on undisturbed, the dancers being only too ready to accept any theory that would not mar their enjoyment. But Sally went about her work with dry eyes and set lips. It was all over, she thought, as she rapidly served the ice-cream; Susan was struck with death, she would never live through a year that had opened so.

"An' after all we've went through together," thought Sally, "to die jest as things is growin' brighter. Well, the Lord knows best, and she'll be took care of up there; but how I am to live without her I s'pose He knows, but it's more than I do. You, Polly," she added aloud, "you ain't got no call to slice that cake so thin. Give the folks the worth of their money, do. And take a sharper knife to it, for a good half goes in crumbs, and I despise crumbs. They are jest clear sinful waste, specially cake crumbs, that can't even be fed to the birds."

"I'll eat 'em," said Heinz Schaefer, who had, with several other boys of his age, volunteered as waiters for the new caterer.

"You carry that coffee straight, without spillin' none of it, and we'll talk about cake afterwards," answered Sally severely. "Polly," she continued, "seems to me we'll come out pretty fair on expenses to-night; and by the next ball we'll be makin' our own ices, and do even better. Run now for just a minute and see how your Aunt Susan is, that's a good girl. Laws! what a thing Providence is, to be sure. To think Dr. Richards should be so ill just at this minute! But there!" she thought within herself a moment later, "what call have I got to be talkin' about Providence like that? The angel Gabriel himself couldn't do her no good ef she's struck with death."

A day or two after this, Susan was sitting alone in the bedroom which was shared by all three. It was scarcely a luxurious apartment; but there was a rag carpet on the floor and a fire in the little grate, which was more like luxury than any of Susan's surroundings for many years. There were patchwork cushions, too, lining the great wooden rocker that gave so grateful a support to her tired frame; her calico dress was clean and whole, and a soft, warm shawl was folded round the thin shoulders. Yet there was no sign of pleasure in Susan's face, no look of basking in creature comforts; she was very white and worn, and from time to time a large tear escaped from under her closed eyelid, and wandered down over the withered cheek.

A little hand fumbling at the lock, the sound of small feet upon the floor, made her brush away these tokens of inward disturbance, and turn with a smile to greet Louis and his friend and accompanying shadow, George, the uninteresting.

"Aunt Susan, we've come to amuse you a little," said Louis half timidly; for there was something beyond his comprehension in the smile on that white face.

"*I've* come to jest that," said Susan quietly, without a shadow of bitterness; "not as I ever was much to brag about, specially compared with Sally; but now I ain't even fit to amuse a child, he has to amuse me."

Louis seated himself cross-legged on the floor at her feet, George imitating him to the letter, and looked up gravely into her face. "My papa says," he continued, "that he hopes you are better, and if you could take a little walk it would do you good."

"Nothin' won't ever do me no good no more, Louis, not in this world."

"And Aunt Sally says," continued the boy, so anxious for the accurate transmission of his message as to pass by this remark. "Aunt Sally says, if you feel strong enough, you could take a walk with me and George, and if you don't, we can 'muse you a little bit."

"Bless your sweet eyes," said Susan, "I ain't strong enough hardly to walk across this room, Louis, let alone goin' out o' doors."

Louis pondered over this for a moment pitifully; it was quite incomprehensible to his childish vigor. Then, his mind reverting to his own concerns, he brought out, as most of us do, the subject which lay uppermost.

"I want to ask you, Aunt Susan, how do boys learn to read?"

Susan laughed. "Same way girls do, I s'pose," she said. "I learned out of a spellin'-book. But you must learn your letters first."

"What's letters?" asked the child.

Susan lifted the large Bible that lay on the table beside her, — a treasure inherited from their mother, to which the sisters had clung all through their days of destitution. It opened of itself at the eleventh chapter of Isaiah.

"That's a letter," said Susan, pointing to the large capital that headed the chapter; "that's A, and A stands for Anna."

"Does it, really?" cried Louis, while George grinned delightedly, and pressed nearer to see for himself.

"There's another A," he went on, glancing down the page, "and another, and — oh, lots of 'em! What stands for George?"

It took some little while to find a G, and L, for Louis was even more difficult; but by dinner-time the child had learned the initials of most of his acquaintances, and Susan's eyes were bright with pleasurable excitement.

"Why do you want to read so bad, all of a sudden, Louis?" she asked, during the course of the lesson.

"'Cause Freddy's papa is sick, and his mamma ain't got time to read 'bout the Christ-child to him," said Louis. "And if I learned, then *I* could, you know, Aunt Susan."

"I guess Freddy's papa will be either well or dead before you learn to read," said Susan thoughtfully; "but you can try, anyway. When was you there?"

"Yesterday. I'm goin' again after dinner. Mrs. Richards says I 'muse Freddy and Miss Pinkie; and I 'muse you, too, don't I, Aunt Susan?"

"You're a real little Christ-child yourself," said Susan fondly.

Louis' little face beamed with quick pleasure. "I didn't know I could be a Christ-child 'cept at Christmas," he said.

"You can be a Christ-child any time, all the year round," replied Susan earnestly; "whenever you make any one good or happy, Louis, that is being like Him."

"Did He make everybody happy?" asked the child rather doubtfully, perhaps remembering the gaunt forms in his Christmas picture, for he added, "Some of their bones stick out awful."

"Well, He ain't never promised to make 'em *fat*," returned Susan dryly; "but as for happy —! Louis, I've been through a lot, and I know what I'm talkin' about. Them that come to Him, He don't never cast out, you remember that. He ain't never forsook me yet, and He ain't a-goin' to. Ef I begin to doubt Him and fret about not bein' of no use no more, then He sends an angel to visit with me; that's what He does, Louis!"

"Does He really?" said George, who had listened open-mouthed to all this conversation.

"Well," said Susan, laughing, though with the tears in her eyes, "p'raps I'd oughter said *two* angels; but, to tell you the truth, George, I forgot you slick and clean."

Männerchor Hall stood about midway between Metzerott's shop and the residence of Dr. Richards, which stood, as Mrs. Randolph had often regretfully remarked, in an old and unfashionable quarter of the town. Louis was therefore able to find his way thither alone; for, though he was but five and a half, children younger than he were left much more to their own guidance, all around him. In fact, one neighbor of the shoemaker's, whose six-year-old daughter was nightly obliged to fetch him home from the corner saloon, had long ago prophesied that Metzerott would ruin that boy by over-care, and advised the inculcation of habits of self-reliance.

But there was no lack of self-reliance about the small figure in the fur cap and brown overcoat, with mittened hands rammed tightly into the pockets of the same, that stepped along so carefully over the icy sidewalks, and watched so keenly at the crowded crossings for a chance to get over. There was, indeed, even a tinge of self-importance; was he not the bearer of knowledge? For the idea had come to Louis that he could "'vide" the letters he had learned with Freddy, and that they could learn to read "togevver;" which plan was found to result admirably, assisted by a box of alphabetical blocks.

Learning to read was at least a quiet amusement; and Louis' visits were found to conduce so greatly to the tranquillity necessary to Dr. Richards's comfort as to be promoted not only by Alice, but even by Pinkie's nurse, who had at first been inclined to consider the shoemaker's son no fit playmate for her little charge. Yet Louis could be noisy enough with George; and was wont to storm in and out of his father's shop in a way to rejoice his father's heart; it was only that with Freddy, who was a cripple, and Pinkie, who was a girl, another side of his nature came into play. Besides, all of Freddy's noisy toys had been put away, — drum, pop-gun, and toy locomotive stood together on a high shelf, with Pinkie's beloved wheel (or *feel*, as she called it) leaning against the closet wall beneath it; its sharply, irritatingly, jingling little bell silent perforce. But there remained innumerable books, and the blocks before named, which were probably somewhat amazed at finding themselves considered from a literary rather than an architectural standpoint.

Among the books was a picture Bible for children, which was not without its influence upon the young minds that studied it; for, though the letter-press had only begun to wear a faint look of familiarity to their young eyes, the pictures were numerous; and most of the stories had been told or read to Freddy until he knew them by heart. Pinkie had never in her life been so good, the nurse said, as when she listened with all her eager little ears to the story of the Flood, illustrated by the toy Noah's Ark; or personated Isaac to Louis' sacrificial Abraham, while Freddy, aided by a pair of immense paper horns, represented the ram caught in the bushes. During Louis' intervening absences, Pinkie was her spoilt, mischievous little self; and disputes between her and Freddy, whose spinal column predisposed him to fretfulness, and who was as unaccustomed to contradiction as Pinkie herself, were distressingly frequent; but when one o'clock brought Louis, smiling radiantly, and full of some new idea that he had picked up, or new word that he had learned from Susan Price or a street sign, and was eager to teach the others by means of Freddy's blocks, — Pinkie's naughtiness and wilfulness vanished like a dream, and she became the most docile little maid that ever invited the judgment of Solomon, or was slain, as Jephthah's daughter, among the hills of Palestine.

Their favorite characters, however, were taken from the New Testament; and though nurse — a devout Romanist — averred that "it gave her a turn, to see thim childer playin' at bein' the blessed Mother and the dear Saviour," she was too learned in the ways of children, and of Pinkie in particular, to risk an interruption, when Dr. Richards lay asleep and the house was holding its breath for fear of disturbing him. So the precedent was established, and after that she was powerless to interfere, except at the expense of a general mutiny.

The *rôle* of the Christ was always taken by Louis; why, it seemed difficult to explain, for he was never unwilling to resign to the others any character to which they specially inclined. Freddy might be Elijah, fed with cake crumbs by wingless ravens at an imaginary Cherith, or King Solomon to Pinkie's Queen of Sheba; or Pinkie herself might choose any impersonation she liked, regardless of sex and size; from Adam or Noah, to Goliath of Gath. But, without argument or controversy, the part of the Christ invariably fell to Louis. Perhaps he cared more for it than they did; perhaps they felt it was less alien to his nature than to theirs. For indeed the thought of "being a little Christ-child himself," which his father had half carelessly planted, and Susan Price had watered, had — whether by a Great First Cause or Fors Fortuna — been given increase.

"Would the Christ-child do that?" he sometimes asked. "How did the Christ-child do?" he would say. And in his mornings spent with George, amusing Aunt Susan, or his afternoons passed in keeping Freddy and Pinkie good and quiet, he was living out that holy Life which he had been taught to believe only a fairy-tale.

As Dr. Richards slowly grew better, and again became alive to sensations other than purely and painfully subjective, — he found some amusement in watching these amateur miracle-plays. One afternoon they were in the full tide of a new story, which he could hardly at first make out, as he lay on his couch, observing them through the open door.

Freddy sat alone in the room impersonating ten lepers, so there was little wonder his father failed to take in the situation. Then the door opened, and Louis entered, followed by all the disciples in the person of Pinkie. A blue broché shawl, belonging to nurse, with a bright gold and red border, was draped about him in a very tolerable imitation of the pictures; his head was bare, and his childish face upturned with so sweet and solemn a look that one might almost have fancied him indeed on his way to Jerusalem and Calvary. Then came the cry from Freddy, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

Louis stopped, and turned slowly. His whole countenance changed and softened into tenderness and pity; he stretched out one hand with a gesture full of authority.

"Go, show yourselves to the priests," he said.

"Now dey's gone," cried Pinkie, who seemed inclined to add the part of Greek chorus to her other characters, "now, dey's all well adain, and here tums one of 'em, yunnin, yunnin fasht. Now, Feddy, you tan dowify Dod."

But just as Freddy began obediently to clap his hands and shout, "Glory, glory," Louis, who had stood all the while motionless, regarding him fixedly, suddenly laid that small outstretched hand on the arm of his little friend.

"Stop, Freddy," he said, still with the same tone of strange authority, "stop, I'm going to cure *you*."

Freddy looked up surprised and half frightened. Alice rose from her seat by the window, and the nurse quietly began to put by her sewing as though to be ready for any emergency, for there was something in the child's manner that showed him to be in awful earnest.

"Freddy, arise and walk!"

The childish tones rang through the room like the notes of a silver flute; there was a pause; Dr. Richards in the next room raised himself on his elbow to see the better, Alice made one step forward, and the nurse stood quietly watching, all unconscious of the tears that followed each other silently down her cheeks. Even Pinkie was hushed with expectation, and I think no one would have been at that moment surprised if the command had been obeyed. But, alas! the two little hands upon the arms of Freddy's chair, the helpless feet concealed by the gay, embroidered skirt, were powerless to raise or to sustain even so slight a weight as that small figure. There was an effort, a struggle perceptible but vain; then Freddy's voice cried out, "O Louis, I can't, I can't! my legs aren't strong enough," and broke into bitter, childish weeping.

The look of authority and confident power on Louis' face changed to incredulity, doubt, and blank hopelessness. His hand fell from Freddy's shoulder — Freddy, who was already in his mother's arms — and he began to unfasten the shawl draped about him.

"It's no use," he said quietly, his manner recalling vividly to the looker-on in the next room Karl Metzerott's stern, self-contained grief at the bedside of his dying wife, — "It's no use; I don't want to be the Christ any more!"

"Den I'll be bad," cried Pinkie; and, suddenly lapsing into one of her naughtiest fits, she threw herself on the floor and screamed in a manner that Louis' composure was not proof against; the tears rose to his eyes and his breast heaved.

"I think I'll go home now," he said with quivering lip.

"No, no, don't ye now, alanna," said nurse hastily, in the intervals of picking up Pinkie — who made herself very stiff indeed — from the floor, and assuring her that she should be sent up to the nursery for the rest of the day, if she cried and made her poor uncle ill again. "Don't go yet, Louis astore, Miss Pinkie 'll never be good without ye. Stop yer cryin', all of yez, and I'll tell ye somethin' now."

"A story?" asked Pinkie, breaking off a roar in the middle, and speaking in a composed and cheerful tone.

"Not a story, darlint, but" — as Pinkie picked up her roar at the very point where she had dropped it, "somethin' nice, very nice, that'll make Louis play with you and Master Freddy again."

Freddy, at this, raised his head from his mother's shoulder, Louis dried his eyes and drew near, and Pinkie condescended to put aside her intended "badness," pending further developments.

Alice stood erect, very white and still.

"I will leave them all to you, nurse," she said, "though it is bitter to feel that any one but his mother can comfort my boy. But if you can make them happy again, do so; I cannot; one must say what one really believes to children, and I do not believe that — any one — could have cured Freddy any better than Louis did."

"God help you, ma'am," said nurse fervently. Then Alice went away into the next room, sat down beside her husband, and laid her hand in his.

"You may be wrong about one thing, dearest," he said softly. "Harrison was talking to me to-day about a new kind of treatment he wants to try for Freddy. It won't cure him, that is impossible; but it may help him very materially. Harrison hopes more from it than I do; but if he is even able to get about with crutches, that will be something."

"Will it be painful?" she asked, mother-like.

"A little, perhaps; but you can bear even to see him suffer, can you not, if it will add to his happiness in the end?"

"*If*, yes; but hush, what is nurse telling them?"

"Sure, ye don't think the blessed Saviour came on earth just to cure sick people, do ye?" asked the mellow Irish voice. "He did heal the lepers, of course, and He raised the dead; but what He come for, you childer, was to make people good. It was just last Sunday our praste was tellin' us that pain is nothing at all at all, and no more is death, compared with sin. You childer can't understand that yet; but ye know the blessed Jesus died, don't ye? and in such pain — why, look here!" and she pulled a crucifix out of her bosom, and showed it to the children, explaining and painting so vividly the pain of such a death that Freddy was ready to cry again, and Pinkie to do battle with His murderers.

"So ye see," continued nurse, "that He suffered pain and death too, but not sin. Nobody ever heard of His doing wrong; and, as Father McClosky said, that shows which He thought the worst of. So, though you childer can't expect to do miracles like He did, you can help each other to be good, and that's what He likes much better."

"If I was dare," said Pinkie, "I'd made yose bad mens yun avay fasht, an' pull yose nails out and say, 'Tum down, dear Saviour!'"

"Sure, there was onct a little bird thought that same," said nurse, availing herself of the opening to change the subject of conversation; and she proceeded to tell them the legend of the Redbreast, to their great delight.

"But he didn't get the nail out," said Louis rather mournfully, as the story ended.

"No; but, sure, he got the Saviour's blood on his breast, and wears it there to this day, and that was honor enough for him."

"Want to shee blood on his bweast," said Pinkie; so nurse put down her sewing, and looked for a picture of a robin, and, by the time she had succeeded, the children were eager for play again, and Freddy's wheeled chair became the Ark of the Covenant, with Pinkie dancing before it as King David, while Louis and his mouth-harp represented all the priests and Levites.

That same night Susan Price quietly and peacefully faded out of life. She had borne sorrow and pain enough; had she helped any one to be good? It would have been hard to judge of so blank and colorless a life. She had never seemed other than a pale reflection of her sister, even her love and loyalty to whom had been too instinctive and shadow-like to appear other than a thing of course.

"I'll try to live without you, Sue," said Sally, looking down on the cold, placid face. "I'll try to live without you, and, since the Lord has taken you, I s'pose I kin, — *now!* But when we was poor and starvin', Sue, I couldn't of, I know I couldn't; and it'll be a long day, sister, until I see you again."

And this was Susan Price's sole funeral oration.

BOOK II.

ALTRUISM.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER TWELVE YEARS.

It was a brilliant day towards the lamb-like end of a March, whose beginning had been of a particularly leonine character. The leaf-buds upon the trees showed faint lines of green along their smooth circumference of delicate brown; the dry, dead grass of winter had been replaced by young blades of a tender verdure; yet the air was cool and pleasantly crisp, though the sunshine, as every one said, was warm enough for June.

At the South Micklegard railroad station, a short, jolly-looking gentleman seemed to differ from the prevailing opinion as to the heat; for his hands were in his pockets, and his overcoat buttoned closely over his stout form up to the smooth-shaven chin.

Up and down the sunniest part of the platform he walked briskly, with at every turn so impatient a glance along the track that, by and by, a porter, wheeling up his empty truck to be in readiness for the coming freight, paused to ask him a question.

"It's not leaving us you are, Father?"

"No, no, Denny, not so bad as that; only waiting for a friend. She's late to-day?" with a motion of his head towards the point whence the train should have appeared half an hour before. Denny, however, was in no danger of misunderstanding the figuratively feminine pronoun.

"Av it was the furst toime, she'd' a 'slipped the track," he said dryly. "That ould tin o'clock niver gits in till noon."

"Then ye should have telephoned me to that intent," replied the father, with a twinkle in his eye. "Didn't I leave me sermon in the midst to hurry down here? And if I miss me dinner to finish it, 'twill be the worse for you sinners, I promise ye, Denny."

Denny grinned, and pulled his forelock; but at this moment a distant whistle announced the approach of the train, and he wheeled his truck leisurely away, while Father McClosky restored his handkerchief to his pocket, and drew his plump figure into a posture of erect expectancy.

The Rev. Bryan McClosky had been for fifteen years in charge of St. Clement's Church, a dingy and unbeautiful brick structure on an obscure street in South Micklegard. His congregation were chiefly poor working-people; and the few outsiders who recognized the rare qualities of head and heart which were joined to his unimpressive and somewhat undignified exterior, were disposed to wonder that the authorities of his Church, with all their well-known tact and skill at making the most of their material, should have kept such a man so long in such an obscure position.

Perhaps, however, the authorities, as usual, knew their own business best. Bryan McClosky was by birth one of the people among whom he labored. His father had been an Irish peasant, and Bryan's first memories of home were of a cabin wherein pigs and chickens were as much members of the household as himself. Natural talent and education had done much to raise him above the level of his former associates, but he was still one of them at heart. By his present congregation he was simply idolized; and, though they stood in no manner of awe of him, the real reverence which they gave and he fully deserved was not at all impaired by his readiness to laugh and joke on all but *very* improper occasions.

Into his religious opinions there would seem to be no need to inquire, since they were to be found in the doctrinal formulas of a Church which tolerates no private judgment of such matters. Nevertheless, there had not been wanting, in high ecclesiastical quarters, rumors as to the potential heterodoxy of Father McClosky, — a heterodoxy which showed itself in just a little over-charity towards heretics, and a too great readiness to unite with them in schemes for the public welfare. He had even been admonished once or twice — or, if that word be too harsh, gently interrogated — on these matters, but in every case was able to prove himself so clearly right, and within the letter of the law, that the only results were, on the part of the authorities, a conviction that while it was best to keep him where he would do least harm, it would also be wisest not to drive him to extremities; and on his side, a habit of good-humored denunciation of his Protestant friends as heretics, and destined to a considerable amount of future discomfort, which, accompanied by a twist of his mouth and a twinkle of his black eyes, was, as he often remarked, "perfectly orthodox, and hurt nobody."

The true key to his character was his loyalty to the Church which had fed, clothed, and educated him. She might not be as infallible as she thought herself; it might even be that she had, historically and doctrinally, made mistakes; but if he admitted these to himself, he was too true a son to allow any one else to guess that he did so. Moreover, there was no one in the world for whose comfort and well-being he cared less than for those of the Rev. Bryan McClosky, so he was not likely to resent the lack of ecclesiastical preferment; and as his gravest doubts were whether he should himself be more at home in any other church than that of his birth, or whether he possessed the personal infallibility necessary to start a church of his own, he asked nothing better than to devote his life to the people whose coarse, ignorant, sometimes stupid and brutalized faces were upturned so eagerly Sunday after Sunday to his pulpit, or bowed beneath his benediction from the altar.

The person for whom he had waited so long at last stepped upon the platform, and was greeted as a "thief of the world" and a "blazin' heretic," to the grinning amusement of Denny and one or two others. Ernest Clare took the matter very quietly, though there was a gleam in his blue eyes and a certain compression about his mouth, that seemed to show that quietude was rather acquired than innate to a man of his character.

He was considerably above the medium height, and magnificently proportioned; indeed, his muscular development was usually the first item of his personal appearance to attract attention. It was only a second glance, with most people, that noted the calm, pure face, with its smooth, white brow, clear eyes, and firm, steadfast lips. There was something rather wonderful about those eyes, under the straight, dark brows and long, black lashes; they were so soft and utterly still in their calm, blue depths, while over their surface glanced lights of fun or anger, or darkened clouds of sorrow. Some one who loved him had once said that Ernest Clare had two souls, — one which bore the burden and heat of the day, and one which abode ever upon the spiritual mountain-tops, rapt in the contemplation of things ineffable, — and that these two souls were mirrored in his eyes. When she said it, it had been true only at times; now the two souls were one.

"It's but a step to 'Prices,'" said Father McClosky; "will ye walk, or ride?"

"Of course, after that delicate hint, I will walk," replied Mr. Clare, with a smile of amusement.

"Sure, I only meant shank's mare for ye to ride on, and carry your valise at that. Oh, ye heretic! if you did but know how glad I am to see you, and have a chance to convert ye."

"I believe that, Bryan; part of it, anyway. Could you get a room for me at this famous co-operative place of yours?"

"Two of them, — bedroom and study."

"Study? Whew! don't you know I'm out of a job and poor as a church-mouse?"

"I gathered as much; but the rooms were vacated the very day I got your letter, and, as it's not often two communicating ones can be had at 'Prices,' why, I took them. I know ye've some scheme afoot, ye spalpeen, and ye might as well be comfortable while ye carry it out."

"But" —

"And av ye've no money to pay for it, there's them that has. Things is dirt-cheap at 'Prices,' anyway."

"Oh, I've a hundred or so that will keep me going for a while. Tell me something about these Prices of yours."

"Here's the place, itself, will tell ye more than I can."

They had halted before a large block of buildings, not of a particularly fine or imposing architecture. In fact, they had been originally dwelling-houses, then had been turned into stores, and had been applied to their present purpose with as little alteration as was practically possible. The corner house still bore over its entrance the words, "*Männerchor Gesangverein;*" but above this, in huge golden letters running along as much of the conglomerate building as possible, shone this inscription, "THE PRICES."

"Will ye go to your rooms — I have the key in me pocket — or will ye see the place first?" asked Father McClosky. "It's half-past eleven, and dinner is from twelve till two. I take mine at one usually, the way I won't be interferin' with the factory hands and teachers and the like, that has only one hour to call their own."

Ernest Clare smiled. "Factory hands and teachers,—*et id genus omne!*" he said. "I think I'll go over the building, Bryan. But do you take all your meals here? I know you've a house of your own."

"Except when I brew me a cup of coffee on my little gas stove of an inclement morning," replied the little priest, with a twinkle of his black eye. "Sure, it saves me the expense of a housekeeper, and a mighty lot of trouble. I've an old woman now to clean and go away peacefully, and one of me acolytes looks after the fires; and av he don't burn the house down some fine day, he'll do mighty well."

"But couldn't you rent your house, and take a room here? You'd save still more, then."

"No doubt; but—well, Ernest, I like me little house. It's quieter and more convenient; besides, it joins the church, and I'd not like to rent it; besides that, I'd get into trouble av I did. But it's mighty convenient to eat here; though, to be sure, the half of them is blazing heretics, like yourself, and the rest howling infidels and bloody-minded atheists. But heretic food agrees mighty well with a Catholic digestion, I find. Here, ye can leave your gripsack in the janitor's office." He led the way as he spoke into the main door, within which a glass door at the side showed a small room, chiefly furnished with shelves, hooks, etc., for the reception of hats, umbrellas, and the like.

"This is Bruno Schaefer, janitor by the divine right of hereditary descent," said Father McClosky, as a pleasant-looking young man sprang up from his seat beside a table, upon which lay several large books. "His brother Franz was the first under the present *régime*."

Bruno smiled broadly at this Irish heredity as he took Mr. Clare's grip, umbrella, and hat, in exchange for a celluloid check.

"Franz has been studying music in Germany, and now plays first violin in some famous orchestra beyant there; and Bruno is to be a heretic preacher like his father," continued the priest. "He has a quiet berth of it here, meanwhile, eh, Bruno? ample facilities for study."

"With a few interruptions thrown in," replied the young man in a clear, pleasant voice.

"Well, this present interruption is the Reverend Ernest Clare, though why a heretic should be reverend, I can't say. He has rooms on the fourth floor of the third house, and ye must learn to know him by sight as soon as ye hear him comin'."

"I couldn't help doing that," said Bruno, looking with admiration, not unmixed with confusion, at his visitor's stalwart physique.

"But I hope Mr. Clare did not understand me to complain" —

"Not at all," said Ernest Clare, extending his hand and pressing Bruno's cordially. "I find it harder myself to rejoice in interruptions than in any other minor trial of this life; but in your case I should think them not only an excellent drill in patience, but also a fine opportunity to study human nature."

"That's very true, Mr. Clare, thank you, sir," said the young man.

"Ye villain! but ye're a true Irishman!" said Father McClosky, as they walked on. "There ye've preached that lad a sermon, and given him a staff to help him on, with just a turn of your smooth tongue."

"A staff? Oh! you mean that suggestion about interruptions. I should rather call that a fly-fan," said Ernest Clare with a twinkle in his eye and a twist of the corner of his firm lips that made his Irish blood still more evident. He was, indeed, a native-born American; but his father had left rather a different class in Ireland from that to which McClosky *père* belonged, to be equally hard-working and almost equally poor in America. The sons had spent their early youth together until Bryan had been taken charge of, at his father's death, by the Church, to be educated for a priest. Later in life they had met again; but if there were any bond between them, formed at that time, and of special strength and tenderness, it was such as would have estranged ordinary men, and even between these was only tacitly understood. Neither had ever put it into words.

"I suppose Herr Bruno is one of your heretics," continued Mr. Clare; "if I like your Jews, Turks, and Infidels as well in proportion, Bryan" —

"Ah! he's a fine lad, Bruno! but is it Turks ye say? Thank the pigs, we're not troubled with the likes of them. Nor the Jews don't take kindly to us either; but I'll show you the grandfather of all the infidels presently, so ye've good luck."

He opened as he spoke a large double swing door, which led into a dining-hall, well lit and ventilated, where, at various-sized tables, about two hundred persons could be accommodated. Only about half of these tables, however, were laid for dinner, for which Father McClosky proceeded to account.

"Ye see," he said, "it's only them that lives in the house, or works near by, that can spare the time to go and come. Teachers at a distance, or hands in the mills or the pottery, mostly has their dinner sent. I'll show ye the wagon starting, in five minutes from now. Then, the mothers of families where there's many little children finds it more convenient to take their dinners at home, too, though most of them come for supper, even the babies."

"It must be a pretty sight," said Ernest Clare.

Father McClosky shrugged his shoulders. "It's Bedlam broke loose," he said; "but sure they enjoy it, and them that don't can stay at home. It's a free country, and no man has a better right at 'Prices' than any other."

"And which costs more — for that is the grand criterion nowadays — to eat here, or have one's meals sent?"

"Both, and nayther," replied the priest, "the charge is exactly the same; but of course there's more wear and tear of property in sending. But, as that comes out of the pockets of the stockholders, it is not supposed that they will incur the loss without necessity."

"Then all the patrons are stockholders?"

"They must be, to the extent, at least, of one share, which is five dollars. The directors found it necessary to pass a by-law to that intent, or else, as they said, just put up with regular boarding-house grumbles. Now, every one has an interest in saving, and them that can, help with the work. That saves hired labor, and makes the dividends larger."

"Then you do pay dividends to your stockholders? I thought it was only to the workers, and that stockholders were to receive merely a fair interest on their investment."

"We've two classes of stockholders," said Father McClosky. "Those who are also patrons, and those who are not. The last named get five per cent on every dollar as promptly as pay-day comes; but the others, since they have a hand in the work, — or a tooth in it, annyhow, — we consider entitled to a share in the profits. We find it's a good working principle. I've a hundred dollars in it meself, that paid me — interest and dividend — about the likes of seven dollars, last year, and sure it's a great joy to me now when a fast day comes round."

"So you take self-interest as the moving spring of your work?"

"Ye must take men as ye find them, Ernest, me boy. I'm not speakin' of meself, that has neither chick nor child, brother nor sister, wife nor husband belonging to me," said Father McClosky with intense seriousness and earnestness; "for sure it's little matter to me if I'm full or hungry; but for a man who has little children, to whom a few dollars makes all the difference between comfort and privation, — why, ye can't blame him if he has an eye to the main chance, as folks call it."

"But has such a man as that always five dollars in hand to pay for his one necessary share?"

"Sure he don't need it, av he's enough to pay for his meals — and, as I said before, it's but little he needs for that. He comes here and enters his name as an applicant for what we call the patron's share, and makes arrangements for his meals, as to the number in his family and the cost per day; then he pays ten cents a week extra on his share until the whole five dollars is paid, and, the day he hands in his last instalment, gets his certificate of stock and twenty-five cents interest; for, ye see, fifty weeks is almost a year, and the directors do it as an encouragement to him."

"Suppose he pays his five dollars down."

"So he ought, if he's got it, and he gets his quarter back again, but only on one share. Sure, it's not a society for the promotion of avarice that we are."

"I see. And one share is sufficient to enable a whole family to become patrons."

"Yes, that is, all who are under age or not self-supporting. We find the young folks eager enough to become shareholders when they begin to work for themselves."

"I dare say. Ah! there is the wagon you spoke of."

They had been standing near a window overlooking a large, paved yard, into which, as he spoke, a wagon rattled at storming pace, and simultaneously a side door opened and two or three boys appeared, each bearing a tray full of tin pails. Each pail was marked in large red letters, legible to Mr. Clare at his window, with the name of the mill, factory, or schoolhouse to which it was destined, and a small white ticket just above bore that of the individual to whom it belonged. It was marvellous to see the swiftness and ease with which the loading was accomplished and the boys vanished, even though one of them stopped to "give a back" to the others, who "leap-frogged" over it into the open door.

"Boys will be boys," said Father McClosky, "and, sure, exercise promotes digestion. Now, that wagon," pointing to where it had just disappeared, "will be back inside of half an hour, ready to fill any other orders. There's mighty good things in some of them buckets, let me tell ye. Miss Sally never stints on them. She says they use up what would be wasted, corners of pie and ends of cake and the like, stray apples and oranges, too, and always a kind thought for any poor girl that's away from home, or a bone-tired teacher, with no one belonging to her."

"Is Miss Sally one of your heretics?"

"She's an angel, av she *don't* look it! Come, I dare say she'll let us into the kitchen, although it's the busy time with them, and ye mustn't expect a word with her; but it's worth seeing."

It proved to be. A large room, about half the size of the dining-hall, was lined on two sides with tables, a third row occupying the middle of the floor, with gangways between every two. Another side of the room showed a line of ranges in full blast. Between fifteen and twenty young people of both sexes were working under the direction of Sally Price, twelve years more gaunt and gray than when we last saw her, but with an alert, wide-awake quickness in her manner very different from the listless, quiet despair that long ago had aroused the sympathy of Dora Metzerott. A cook was in charge of each range, and a sub-cook stood ready to wait upon each. Along the fourth side of the room ran a double row of electric bells, each bearing the number of the table with which it was connected, and at a desk beneath them sat Polly, as pretty, and apparently as young as ever, though now, in truth, nearly in her thirtieth year.

"My friend Mr. Clare, Miss Polly," said the priest. "He wants to see how you send in a meal at 'Prices.' We'll not disturb annybody."

Polly smiled, but in a pre-occupied way, and observed, with her eye upon the clock, which was upon the stroke of twelve, that if they didn't mind the bells ringing over their heads, they could get a good view at that end of the room, and be in nobody's way.

"The orders are left, and the tables engaged at any time during the morning," explained the priest; "so when a bell rings, they know exactly who it is, and what he wants. The hour also is specified, and av he comes on time, his dinner is dished and ready."

"Suppose he comes early, or late ?"

"Then he don't get it until the time, or gets it cold. 'Prices' believes in military punctuality."

As he spoke, the clock struck twelve, and an electric bell sounded.

"Number 25. One !" cried Polly, clearly and distinctly. A brisk-looking girl whisked some dishes on a tray, and started for the door, beside which she paused to receive a celluloid check from a girl who sat at a high desk, with a big book, a box of checks of varying values, and a cash-box before her.

"That's the cashier," continued the father, who had paused to mutter an "Ave" while this was occurring. "She looks in her big book for the order belonging to 25, and gives the girl a check according. It's a ready-money business here. The waiters are all numbered as well as the bells, and take their turn in regular rotation."

"The discipline is truly military," observed Mr. Clare.

"Ah! ye're conversant with Sunday schools, and that's why ye take notice of the same," said Father McClosky.

"And who of these are volunteer workers?" asked Ernest Clare, watching closely the busy scene before him.

"All of them are *that*," returned the father; "but Miss Sally, Miss Polly, the cashier, treasurer, secretary, and six cooks get regular salaries. The man that drives the wagon is an expressman by trade, and owns his team; he is hired by the year, and, being a stockholder and patron, charges very fairly. As for these girls and boys, they enjoy the work. There are regular relays of them; and these are arranged so as to intersperse work with books and healthful play, according to the rhyme. On Saturdays and Sundays, the teachers and some of the factory hands take their turn at cooking — as sub-cooks, that is — and waiting; and, sure, it's a great diversion to them, especially the teachers, after using their brains all the week." '

"Rest is really only a change of labor, then, to them?"

"It's purely voluntary, ye know," said the priest. "None of them need do a hand's turn av they don't like, though I won't say but what public opinion would have some weight; but those that are weak or sickly Miss Sally looks out for, and won't let them do a stroke more than is good for them."

"Miss Sally has it in her power to make or mar everything, it seems to me."

"Ay! ye come to that, after all, Ernest. Didn't ye say a while ago that the mainspring of this work was self-interest? Well, ye was wrong. Self-interest is only the balance-wheel; the mainspring is love of our neighbor. We couldn't keep things going a day but for that. The root of the whole business was Christian charity, and the branches partake of the same life."

"You have simply helped the growth or lessened the friction by making one's neighbor's interests identical, for the most part, with one's own," said Ernest Clare.

"As they should be. As long as men are individuals they will have individual interests; but one man's food and clothing were never meant to be gained at the expense of his neighbor, as we can see when the matter is carried to its ultimate conclusion."

"As how, for instance?"

"Well, in the case of shipwrecked mariners, or them dirty cannibals that ate one another for pleasure," said the priest. "Sure, aither of them is only the main principle of our modern civilization stripped of its glittering adjuncts."

Mr. Clare did not answer. There was a glance in his eye and a quiver at the corner of his mouth, very like amusement; yet he realized in the depths of his great loving heart the awful truth of the picture which his friend had drawn in such quaint colors.

"I think," he said at last, "that I had rather not be a cannibal, that is — rich."

The carpenter's shop, tin-shop, jeweller's, dry-goods, shoemaker's, and other shops, were all on the first floor, facing upon some one of the four streets that bounded "Prices." Above these were the dressmaker's and milliner's establishments; but there was little here to notice or describe, as the one distinctive feature of each separate business was, that it was owned by the company and managed by salaried workmen. There was one buying agent for the collective establishment, whose business was to fill the orders, transmitted, through the executive committee, from the heads of departments. These, therefore, while they had plenty of work, had little or no anxiety. Their salaries were secure, and their only care the business of the day. Literally, they took no thought for the morrow.

"We find our shops are very popular among the rich folks at the North End," said Father McClosky; "they say we give good weight and good measure, and every article just what it professes to be, no less. A man — sure, it's a Christian he calls himself; and he has a fashionable shoe-store up-town, and was mad at us for under-selling him — and says he to me, 'So you have adopted the maxim "Honesty is the best policy." How do you find it works?' says he. 'Maxim,' says I; 'that's no maxim at all,' I says; 'it's aither a fact or a lie, and mostly the latter,' says I; 'but it ought to be the universal fact that it is with us,— sure, I mean universally the fact that we find it,' says I."

"And so it will be, some day."

"It's always of a hopeful disposition ye were, Ernest. There's too much cross-grained selfishness in the world for that day to come soon, I'm thinkin'."

"I did not say, soon," replied Ernest Clare quietly. "I do not know when it will come, or how; and there are times when one gets discouraged; but I believe it *will* come, Bryan. However, I am not ready to talk yet about my own beliefs, hopes, or plans. Is this my door?" for they had now reached the lodging department, where rooms were rented singly or in suites, to individuals or families.

"Sure ye're pretty high up, but, with an elevator, that's just as convenient as the ground floor. And there's a fire-escape just beyond, and mighty handy, in case of need; though, for myself, I'd rather burn up alive like a Christian, than break me neck down one of them things," said the priest as he applied his key to the door.

CHAPTER II.

NEO-SOCIALISM.

MUCH to the surprise of Father McClosky, the key declined to enter the key-hole, for excellent Communistic reasons: there was a key already there. Moreover, voices, one very loud, the other very tearful, sounded on the other side of the door.

The priest drew back, with a sorrowful gesture. "It's Mrs. Kellar," he said. "She is what we call our Matron, for want of a better name; *die Hausfrau*, the Germans call her. She sees to the rooms, gives out the bed-linen and so on, and is an invaluable person, so clean and conscientious. But — well, one must have *les défauts de ses qualités*, as the French say; and though she is a born ruler and manager, she *has* got a tongue and a temper. Of course, she has a pass-key to every room, and I suppose something has gone wrong in here, and she is scolding the unfortunate perpetrator."

"Then we had better go in; I dare say it is nothing of any consequence that has happened," said Ernest Clare, much amused by his friend's correct English, which betrayed an inward perturbation very flattering to Frau Kellar's powers of eloquence.

"I suppose we had," said the little man hesitatingly; but with the touch of the door-knob his courage seemed to return. "Sure, she's a well-meaning woman," he said with a smile; "and as for temper, it's not an Irishman that can cast a stone at her, from Malachi with the Collar of Gold, to the blessed St. Kevin himself."

"Here he opened wide the door;" but there was a great deal more than darkness within. It was a neatly but plainly furnished sitting-room, with a brown-painted pine table, covered with a red cloth, four cane-seated chairs, and one large rocking-chair, a few empty pine bookshelves lining one side, an engraving or so, and a cheerful-looking carpet, on which — alas! — a hod of coals had been overturned. A small, pale, nervous-looking girl, with weak blue eyes and reddish hair, was on her knees beside the coals, picking them up in a weakly ineffective manner, that seemed to add fuel to the flame of Frau Kellar's righteous anger, to the outpouring of which the victim returned no answer save the tears which dropped fast over the bridge of her nose, and, being brushed aside by a grimy hand, by no means added to her beauty.

The entrance of the two clergymen seemed to put the last stroke to her misery, for she immediately fell over on her face upon the coals, and lay there, making no sound, but shaking from head to foot with hysterical passion.

"Why, what's all this?" said the priest good-humoredly. "Is that Lena Schaefer? You haven't been making Lena cry, Mrs. Kellar?"

"The lazy good-for-nothing!" cried Mrs. Kellar. "Will tears pick up the coals, I should like to know?"

"Not so well as a pair of hands," said Mr. Clare cheerfully. "Come, Miss Lena, since this is to be my room, I have the best right to work in it, haven't I?"

He picked up the thin, light form as if she had been a child, and set her, literally, to dry off, in the rocking-chair, which she only half filled, and whence, overcome with amazement, she peeped from under the shadow of her apron at the handsome gentleman on his knees remedying the results of her carelessness.

"It's a poor welcome for you, Mr. Clare," said Frau

Kellar. "I came in to see if everything was in order, and found the fire nearly gone out; so I rang for Lena, as these rooms are her business, and the silly thing, before she could get the coal on the fire, dropped the hod, and then couldn't do nothing but cry."

As she explained, she had made a futile effort to assist in remedying the evil, which Mr. Clare had silently but decidedly refused.

"Sure, I suppose she came in such haste that her hand shook. Isn't it right I am, Lena?"

"The bell rang so loud it frightened me," said Lena, who had been making a brave struggle for self-control. "I didn't forget the fire, Father; it was only that I didn't put on quite enough coal."

"And ain't the best of us liable to errors of judgment?" said the priest. "Give the child leave to run away now, Mrs. Kellar, and bathe her eyes. She'll feel better when she's had her dinner."

"I'd like to sweep up the dust for you, sir," said the girl, with a look of appealing confidence, which made her face, despite its homeliness and grimy tear-stains, not absolutely unattractive.

"To-morrow," said Ernest Clare, smiling down at her, "to-morrow you shall do whatever you like, but for to-day Father McClosky's advice is the best. A good dinner is the medicine you need." He bowed her from the room as if she had been the first lady in the land — poor Lena, who had never had the door opened for her since she was tall enough to reach the knob — and said as she passed him, "I am glad you have the care of these rooms, for I am sure you will take great pains with them; but I will try to give you as little trouble as possible."

Lena did not reply; poor girl, her face and eyes were not in condition even to look an answer; but she went away with a heart overrunning with gratitude, and a firm determination that, while she had strength to crawl, Mr. Clare should never have cause to complain of neglect.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Kellar had seized the hearth-broom, and was busily getting rid of the relics of the catastrophe. No one offered to relieve her of the duty; the priest had seated himself, and was quietly looking on, and Ernest Clare passed through the open door into his bedroom, in order to remove from his hands the traces of his late occupation.

"Sure, it's a pity," began the priest, after a moment or two —

"Don't speak to me, Father McClosky," said the woman, half petulantly; "ain't I calling myself worse names yet than I've called Lena already?"

"But calling names is no good, Mrs. Kellar; though I admit there's a power of satisfaction in it at times."

"That's so, Father. That poor girl! Did not Dr. Richards say that the best hope for her health is in the regular hours and regular work here? and didn't I take her from her father's house to have her under my eye"—

"Well, well, we are none of us perfect," said the priest consolingly; "but I think ye should try to remember one thing, Mrs. Kellar. It's a great thing we are doing here for the poor, and there's a many would like to see something of the kind prevail all through the land; but that sort of thing, Mrs. Kellar, ye may call it Communism, or Socialism, or whatever ye like, but av there isn't self-control and loving-kindness at the bottom of it, 'twill be a hell on earth."

"Indeed, you are right, Father, and I've said so already many a time," returned Frau Kellar, with her apron to her eyes; "but it don't tie my tongue when I once get to scolding."

"Nothing will do that but the grace of God," said the priest. "Av ye was a Catholic, ye'd have the Sacraments to help ye; but, sure, even as a Protestant, ye have Him who is above all Sacraments. There's a little book I lent Miss Sally once about the Blessed Laurence. He was a poor lay brother in a monastery; but he had an abiding sense of the presence of God, even amongst his pots and kettles. Sure, he said it made no difference to him whether he was kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, itself, or working in his kitchen — it was the monastery cook he was — for God was with him just the same. And so, av his pots boiled over, or his subordinates failed in their duty, or whatever happened, he was always at peace, and never ruffled or excited about anything."

"I could never be as good as that," sighed Frau Kellar.

"Sure, Rome wasn't built in a day," returned the priest encouragingly. "Anyhow, it's the only cure for speaking first and thinking after, to have your mind full of Him and your heart of His love. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and then the afterthought would find nothing to repent of."

"You'll lend me the book, won't you, Father?" she asked humbly. "Do you suppose the Blessed Laurence was better than Miss Sally?"

"I'll lend ye the book with pleasure, but ye'll find little there beyond what I've told ye. There was but little to say of a poor, ignorant man that could not even read. And as for Miss Sally, sure, it's not for me to measure degrees of goodness; but I'll tell ye one thing, if Miss Sally *is* a saint, she's not aware of it. Is it going you are? God be good to you," and, as he pressed her hand, the good little man added, "Av ye was a Catholic, ye know, I could be of more use to ye."

"Sure, I ought to have tried harder to convert her to the true faith," he thought, when he was left alone; "but she might have been the death of poor Lena av I'd distracted her mind with arguments, so I applied the remedy that was handiest; but it's the best, after all, for all beliefs, and maybe He don't see the difference between Catholic and Protestant that some of us do here below."

"Bryan," said Mr. Clare, re-entering at this moment. He took his stand on the hearth-rug, and looked down upon his friend with a look that was half amused and all reverent; then he said, "I don't wonder now at the success of 'Prices.' I understand it."

"Do ye, now?" said the priest, returning a glance in which sympathy was mingled with a comical embarrassment; for Father McClosky was exceedingly shy, not only of his own good works, but of having his dealings with one heretic known to another. Also he stood rather in awe of the keen, clear, logical brain opposite him.

"I believe so," replied Mr. Clare, laughing outright, "except in one point, and that a minor one. Is the present stock company nominally the same — of course I know it is not exactly — that owned the Maennerchor Club House twelve years ago?"

"That's aisely answered," replied the priest, with an air of relief at which his friend laughed again. "It is, nominally. There was maybe twenty or a dozen shareholders at that time who wanted the club-house chiefly for their own recreation; for the most of them was rich men, and, so it paid expenses, they didn't look for dividends. When Miss Sally took the care of it, and they began to see how things was going, they behaved mighty well; first, they reduced the par value of a share to five dollars, as we have it now, and gave every shareholder one vote and no more. And, shure, that's fair enough," continued the Father, with a conscientious desire to be logical whenever he could;

"for av a rich man has twenty votes in a meeting of shareholders, why shouldn't he vote twenty times for president?"

"Because human nature is happily illogical, and seldom follows out false premises to their ultimate conclusions," said Ernest Clare, with a gravity which was belied by the twinkle in his eye.

"Oh, get out with your logic and your ultimate conclusions! It's because the fellow that tried it on first would be mobbed, that's why. Conclusions, indeed!"

"Well, go on," with a laugh; "what was the effect of manhood suffrage in this particular instance?"

"The *ultimate* effect — since ye like the word so well — is that they get five per cent on their money, and have their recreation just the same. For the club-house is mostly as it was, and, shareholders not necessarily belonging to the club, the members have their parlor, dining-room, and hall to themselves whenever they like. The only difference is that the hall is never rented to the public now; and on occasions of balls, concerts, and the like, they ain't apt to shut out any regular patrons of 'Prices' who want to get in."

"Are any of the old shareholders now members of the board of managers?"

"Four or five of them, and we've the same president and secretary. But the real business is transacted by the executive committee, three in number, and two constituting a quorum."

"It's a flexible arrangement, at any rate."

"It's beautiful," said the priest with enthusiasm, "and works as easy as rolling off a log."

"Ah! that simile reminds me of my own situation. I have emphatically rolled off *my* log."

"Ye wrote me ye had resigned your charge."

"Resigned! Did you ever hear of the grand bounce?"

said Mr. Clare drolly. "Because that's what I got for preaching Socialism."

"Mother of Moses! Tell us about that."

"Well, you know I always held the opinion that to call nothing one's own, to hold all things in common, is the flower and crown of Christianity. But it was *merely* an opinion, not a belief; I was what you might call a *dilettante* Socialist. My first call was to a fashionable church as assistant, as you remember; and when this last charge was offered me, I slipped into it, some way. I suppose I had become accustomed to a life among people of wealth and cultivation; and, besides, there was at the time some external pressure, though quite unconscious on the part of the person who exerted it. I wanted to be in a position which no one need be ashamed to share with me."

His voice had grown hoarse and low, and Father McClosky bent his brow on his hand without attempting a reply. After a moment the speaker continued, —

"Well, that is all over now; and I can thank Him for her life and — for her death. But it cut to the roots of my life; it tore the scales from my eyes, and showed me the true meaning of all that I saw around me. I could be a *dilettante* no longer. Yet just because the commonplace business arrangements of the world had suddenly become so terrible, so openly subversive of God's order and out of harmony with His creation, I did my utmost to avoid giving offence. I could not expect my people to see at a glance the hollowness and falsity of all they had been trained to believe right and just, or to spring with one bound to the height which I had attained through many struggles and much tribulation. But one cannot be so gentle, so considerate, that a congregation of millionnaires will not take offence at being told that every dollar they own, beyond what is needful for themselves and their families, is a wrong to Christ's poor; that the Jewish land laws were of divine appointment, and a model for our imitation; and that every man, woman, and child has a moral right, and should have a legal one, to an equal share of the wealth — not the money — belonging to the nation."

Father McClosky drew a long breath. "Ye said *that* to them?" he said.

"You think it required courage; but I assure you the difficulty was to restrain my words, not to bring them out. I had much ado sometimes to keep from calling them a generation of vipers, and warning them to flee from the wrath to come. But the millionnaire of to-day is in much the same position as the Southern slaveholder of the last generation. The houses, lands, stocks, bonds, and what not of the one appear to him as much his rightful possession as the negroes of the other did to him. And the analogy can be traced still farther; for, convince the millionnaire that his dollars are not rightfully his, and how is he going to get rid of them?"

"Ye're right enough there," said the priest; "he can't bury money, drown it, or give it away without doing infinite harm to other people. It's the old story, Clare; the fathers ate the sour grapes, and the childer has the toothache. But what brought your matters to a crisis at last?"

"A course of lectures on the Sermon on the Mount," said Mr. Clare, smiling, "after which they could bear with me no longer. I am bound to say, however, that they acted in as delicate and gentlemanly a manner as possible. They did not even call a formal vestry meeting to ask me to resign; it was merely intimated to me by my senior warden that if I had any other opening in view, he thought — personally — that it would be better to consider it, as the doctrine I had lately preached might be *true*, but it wasn't exactly practical, and *not* very acceptable to the people. He was very kind — good old man! — but it was evident that he looked upon me as a crank, pure and simple."

"Sure, I can imagine the whole interview," said the Father, shaking with laughter at Mr. Clare's evident effort not to imitate the senior warden's voice and gestures. "But what are ye going to do about it?"

"Well," he replied, "I have, as I told you, a few hundred dollars in hand; and I don't know a parish in the United States where I could stay for a year, preaching as I must preach. The only thing I see is to fall back on my trade, working with my hands, like St. Paul, and chargeable to no man. Then I should be God's freeman, and able to lift up my voice against the crying evils of the day, not being in bondage to any man."

Father McClosky sprang from his seat and paced the room excitedly; but the very excess of his sympathy made him try to act as brake or cog-wheel upon his friend's enthusiasm.

"Ye blatherskite!" he said, "I suppose ye'll be after starting a new church, with yourself for pope!"

"On the contrary, I am orthodox of the orthodox," said Mr. Clare. "I had a talk with my bishop a day or two ago, and found him very sympathetic, though with a reserved opinion that I was making too much ado about very little. No, McClosky, to every age its own conflicts. The sixteenth century did its work pretty thoroughly; a new Church in our days is an anachronism. The great battles of the nineteenth century must be fought, not among the hills of dogma, but in the plain of Conduct, which is watered by the river of Brotherly Love."

"And do you expect a Catholic to join ye in underrating dogma?"

"God's heaven bends alike over hill and plain," said the other gently.

"Sure it's a beautiful poet ye are," said the priest with would-be sarcasm. He continued his walk for a few more moments, then said slowly, "But it's not denyin' I am that such soldiers as you are wanted on the right side. It's mighty little brotherly love for any but themselves that Socialism has shown so far."

"I hope to see the day," said Ernest Clare calmly, "when the Golden Rule will be the Socialist's motto, and the Sermon on the Mount his *vade mecum.* They must be if we are to have law and order, not a reign of anarchy. And that is why, Bryan, I feel that my course is *not* much ado about nothing. One way or the other, Socialism must come; and it will be all the difference in the world whether Christianity leads or follows the movement."

"I make but little doubt that Holy Church will be equal to the occasion," said Father McClosky; "sure she has the principle in herself, in her clergy and her religious orders. What is a monastery or nunnery but a commune?"

"You are right! And I fancy the Spirit of the Age has something to say to the revival of the religious orders in my own church, though our new monks and nuns would be the first to protest against that view of the matter. No, I don't doubt the willingness of any *body* of Christians to fall into line, once the change is made and established by law; I only doubt our readiness to lead; yet, unless we do lead, I see small hope of the new kingdom being established."

"Without violence," corrected the priest.

"At all," said the other. "The kingdom of the Prince of Peace cannot be established by the sword."

Father McClosky rubbed his nose thoughtfully. "And what is it ye mean to do?" he said.

"To maintain myself by my trade; if possible, in connection with 'Prices;' after that, to do what I can."

"Then the first thing ye'd better be at," said the Father, "is to come to dinner; for, sure, the clock is on the stroke of one!"

CHAPTER III.

PRINCE LOUIS.

"THE one o'clock dinner," said Father McClosky, "is when ye'll see the 'home folks,' as we call 'em, that is, the employés of 'Prices,' — excepting the cooks and waiters, — and some of them that lives in the house. The Prices themselves — that is, Miss Sally and Miss Polly — takes their dinner then, the rush bein' over, and the 'home folks' not in such a hurry."

As he spoke they came upon two girls who were talking eagerly in the lower corridor, one of whom proved to be Lena, the unfortunate, and the other her sister Gretchen, a tall, placid personage with a look of great determination, and what New-Englanders call "faculty."

Upon the appearance of the two gentlemen, Lena blushed and tittered nervously; but Gretchen faced them with perfect composure, and gave Mr. Clare an opportunity of recognizing her as the person he had observed at the treasurer's desk.

Father McClosky only favored them with a nod, as he hurried his friend along, observing that the dinner would be cold, and that they were to have the table next to the Founders.

"And who are the Founders?"

"The Prices, Metzerotts, and Rolfs. Sure ye've heard the story of how they began 'Prices' amongst 'em? And for old sake's sake, I suppose, and partly because it saves time and labor, they always dine together, and some way it got the name of the Founders' table."

"Ah! there he is now," continued the Father in a different tone, as at that moment they encountered two others, — an elderly man and a youth, — on their way to the same quarter of the room as themselves. "There's the Emperor. Emperor, let me introduce my friend, Mr. Clare."

"I think I have heard of you before, Mr. Emperor," said Ernest Clare, cordially shaking the blackened palm held out to him, "under the name of Metzerott."

"That's my name, Mr. Clare, and I'm not ashamed of it," replied Karl Metzerott. He had changed but little, though his hair had become "a sable silvered," and his countenance bore marks of his full fifty years; but the clear glance, the firm mouth and appearance of perfect health and full vigor would have made the promise of another fifty appear in his case not unlikely of fulfilment.

The three founders! what a study their faces were, thought Ernest Clare, watching them from the next table. Sally Price's, which, now that the resting time had come, had lost its keen intentness, and gained a sweet, reposeful look that resembled the old weary, listless passiveness as a dim church window before the dawn is like the same window flashed through by the rays of the rising sun. Then Karl Metzerott, with his strong, sturdy, sensible face, — strong enough to keep in order the fierce passions that lay beneath it, but not too sensible to be fully conscious of his own share in all that he saw around him, and of the significance of his nickname the Emperor. Last of all, Frau Anna, with her thin cheeks, upon which the color seemed burnt in, her dark, eager, restless eyes, and unsatisfied mouth. Her voice, too, had a querulous sound; and perhaps it was the instinct of the physician — the healer of souls — that caused the quiet blue eyes to rest so long upon her before exploring the other faces around the table. There was nothing especially remarkable about the brisk, good-looking young man who sat next her, except his inability to keep those sparkling dark eyes of his away from the next table, where Gretchen Schaefer was, apparently placidly unconscious of him and his glances. Frau Anna, however, noted every one, and as she followed them with amused rather than resentful eyes, it may be inferred that Gretchen's unconsciousness was not so real as it looked; for Anna Rolf adored her eldest son, though it may be that the place nearest her heart was filled by the boy whose birth had been so closely followed by her husband's death. Fritz knew this, amusedly; had he been the favorite, it is possible that George's peculiar disposition would have rendered necessary a different adverb. He was a loosely built, awkward-looking youth, with an overhanging brow, sullen, blue-gray eyes, and heavy jaw; much given to thinking, and a good deal to brooding, when he had nothing of importance to think about; very like his father, in short, and equally capable of becoming enslaved by an *idée fixe*, — a youth who should have studied the Elements of Euclid along with his catechism, and for whom the differential Calculus was a part of the scheme of salvation.

It was a very different face opposite him. "Little Annie," as she used to be called, was now a tall girl of nineteen, not pretty, perhaps, but fair and restful to tired eyes; like George, but with a serious thoughtfulness about the eyes and mouth instead of his brooding sullenness. She and Louis always sat beside each other, perhaps rather too pointedly for the success of any parental scheme; and, indeed, though they were evidently on the best of terms, there was nothing like love-making in the quiet looks which they exchanged from time to time.

The two tables were quite near enough for conversation, and Karl Metzerott was not slow to begin one.

"I wish you'd explain to me, Father McClosky," he said, as that person crossed himself and murmured a Latin grace, "what good you get from that sort of thing. Does your dinner agree with you better after it?"

"I said I'd show ye the grandfather of all the infidels," said the priest, turning to Mr. Clare, "and there he sits. But I've done arguin' with ye, Emperor. It's my friend here is in that line of business, and I'll leave ye to him. Sure, he's just argued himself out of his own pulpit and five thousand a year on account of his rabid Socialism."

There was a perceptible emotion at the Founders' table; then Sally Price said dryly, "Well, I must say he don't look the character."

"And I hope I don't act it," said the rabid Socialist, smiling. "But I should explain to you, Mr. Metzerott, that I never argue."

"And ye'll say next that ye never did."

"I wish I could," said Ernest Clare, laughing, yet with a half-sigh. "But, unfortunately, I began the world with my lance in rest, ready to argue with all and sundry. Only experience has taught me how worse than useless it is. No one was ever converted by argument; thousands have been hardened in error by it."

"And who is it at 'Prices' you want to convert?" asked Karl Metzerott.

"I have come to 'Prices' to find work if I can," replied Ernest Clare. "I was a poor boy, Mr. Metzerott, and learned the trade of a carpenter, not from choice but necessity, and supported myself by it until I went to the Theological Seminary."

"Where ye was educated free like myself, though not in the true faith," said Father McClosky. "Ye see, Emperor, there's more charity among Christians than ye give 'em credit for."

"They'll educate priests to keep up their own system of lies. Of course they will," replied Metzerott; "and much good it does, when one of 'em can't live by the trade they taught him. Though I beg your pardon, sir, if I am rude," he added apologetically.

"Only mistaken," said Ernest Clare, smiling. "Don't you remember how St. Paul worked with his hands at his trade of tent-making rather than be chargeable to any man?"

"It's the best thing I ever heard of him," replied the other. "He was too much of a man, I suppose, to live on charity."

Ernest Clare laughed softly. "You call yourself a Socialist, Mr. Metzerott?"

"I do, indeed; an out-and-out one.'

"Then, are you not rather false to your own principles? The clergy are a standing witness of the right of every man who will work to a support at the hands of the nation."

Metzerott was too confused by this new way of putting the case to be able at first to reply, and Mr. Clare went on. "Unfortunately, my individual support came only from a very small part of the nation, who had become possessed of a larger proportion of the nation's wealth than I was quite able to approve of; so, pending the arrival of the Commune, I am compelled — mind you, *compelled*, Mr. Metzerott — either to hold my tongue upon what I believe to be vital truth, or to work at my trade like a man."

"By thunder, you *are* a man!" cried Karl Metzerott. "And your trade is carpentering, you say? I suppose you know that our head carpenter died a week ago?"

"My friend here wrote me as much."

"So I thought. Well, we've been puzzled who to put in his place; for he had only boys under him, not old enough for the head of a department, and the applications we've had — but, however, it's a matter for the board of managers, not the dinner-table. I'm a member of the board, though; and if you send in your application, I'll see that it's looked into."

"I am very much obliged to you," said Ernest Clare quietly. Then, with a smile, and a glance of Irish mischief, he added, "And you won't expect me to hold my tongue about what you may consider a system of lies, while to me they are vital truths?"

"Hold your tongue? By gracious, Mr. Clare, it's a free country! No man need hold his tongue in America, as long as it's a decent one."

Mr. Clare smiled again, but made no reply, and in a few moments more Louis pushed back his chair and rose to go.

"Why, you have eaten nothing, Louis," cried his father, with some vexation. "I do not see that if a pink and white chit like *that* comes to be sixteen, it should spoil your appetite."

"Pink and brown, if you mean Miss Rose Randolph," said Fritz. "She's pretty, though. Why not let the child enjoy himself, Emperor? it won't last long."

"And, of course, he has his Sunday coat on," said Frau Anna with a frown.

During these rather personal remarks Louis had waited with his hand on the back of his chair, and a look of amusement not unmixed with vexation, while the color rose high in his young cheek; but at this point he replied.

"I am only going to give Mr. Fred a ride in his wheeled chair," he said, "and I won't hurt my coat, Frau Anna, though I am better able to buy a new one than he is."

"The boy has a right to his holiday if he pays his fine," struck in Metzerott roughly; "and I'm glad he should do a kindness if he can. What vexes me — well, he knows what it is, but no one else has any concern with it."

"I'll never vex you if I can help it, father," said Louis gently; "and all I can do is small return for the kindness I have received."

"So!" said his father.

Louis stood for a moment longer, looking down upon him with a puzzled brow. He was slightly above the medium height, with a figure rather firmer and better filled out than is often seen at his age, and a manner of that perfect unconsciousness of himself which is the essence of good-breeding, so that, in his gray "Sunday suit," he looked, as one of Pinkie's school friends had once been heard to say, "quite like a gentleman." The face was a young face, with a complexion of girlish fairness, and eyes of that pure, transparent blue seldom seen beyond childhood. Across the white brow waved hair of gold just darkened into brown, and the brows and lashes, too, gave golden *reflets* to the sunshine; there was scarcely a trace of masculine down on the short, curved upper lip or the smooth cheek, yet, despite all this, the face of Louis Metzerott at eighteen was neither boyish nor effeminate. The low squarely cut brow, the short, straight nose, the full but firm lips, the square chin, were thoroughly masculine in form; and the wistful gravity of the clear eyes was that of one who had looked upon the sin and sorrow of life without quite seeing how these were to be set right.

As he turned to leave the room, his eyes, with that look in them, met those of Ernest Clare, full of that still peace that seemed to hold the solution of all life's mysteries. Then both smiled, and Louis held out his hand, a firm and shapely one, though with some traces of his daily work at his father's trade.

"I am very glad you have come to Micklegard, Mr.

Clare," he said, "and I hope you will get — whatever you want."

"And I am glad to make your acquaintance, Prince Louis," said Ernest Clare, cordially pressing the young hand; "and much obliged for your good wishes. I hope we shall be good friends."

Louis smiled with a relieved look, and, before leaving the room, bent to whisper in Annie's ear. The girl smiled gently, but made no other reply; and Mr. Clare noticed that her eyes had a tired look as she raised them to his face.

"I think you struck it that time, sir," observed Polly to Mr. Clare. "A prince is just what our Louis looks like, and ought to be."

"He'd better be an honest man; princes are very poor property," growled the Emperor, with would-be severity.

"He's more like an angel," said Miss Sally.

But Louis was no angel, he was only a man; for this was what he had whispered to Annie Rolf.

"I will tell her who painted the beautiful roses, *liebes Aenchen.*"

CHAPTER IV.

CINDERELLA'S SLIPPERS.

The dinner-wagon which we saw depart from "Prices" had, on its second trip, deposited a tray and a small brown-paper parcel at Dr. Richards's. The tray bore several viands destined to furnish forth a portion of Pinkie's birthday feast; for Alice often found it convenient to order dishes whose preparation required much time or pains, though not marching with the times to the extent of a whole dinner. The parcel was addressed in Louis' best hand — which was a very good hand indeed — to "Miss Rosalie Randolph."

It was a very small parcel indeed, so small that Miss Virginia Dare, Pinkie's "best friend" and desk-mate, who had come to dine with her, clasped her hands with an instant and disinterested exultation.

"Jewelry, Pinkie!" she exclaimed; "maybe a complete *parure!* from your father!"

Pinkie shook her head with its soft short curls of dark brown. She was exceedingly pretty, as brown as a gypsy, as graceful as a fairy, and as full of mischief as — but here I pause. No hackneyed kitten could supply a simile for Pinkie's mischief. There was *nothing*, as her long-suffering teachers, pastors, and masters were accustomed to say with emphasis, — nothing, in the way of mischief, that that girl was not up to. But, as they were accustomed to add, "her heart was in the right place, after all, and there was no great harm in her. With good training she would make a fine woman yet."

"It's not the governor's fist," said Pinkie, with a shake of her dark head, while the color deepened in her bright cheeks and crept upward to her pretty blue-veined temples. "And as for *parures*, Virgie, you don't know the old man. He won't let me wear even a finger-ring, when he knows it. Jeffersonian simplicity is his line."

"Oh! never mind what *his* line is; the line around that box is what I'm thinking of. Pinks! are you *never* going to open it?"

"How do you know it's a box?" asked Pinkie leisurely.

"How do I know that my nose is a Roman and yours a snub? by the shape, of course. Rosalie, Rosalia! I die, I perish, I positively gasp with curiosity. Will you slay me here in cold blood, before your very eyes?"

"I wouldn't mind a bit, if — if I wasn't so very curious myself," said Pinkie, laughing. "But mind, now, Virgie, whatever it is, mum's the word. There's a small suspicion rising on my mind" —

"The size of a man's hand?"

"No, boy's hand. And if you breathe a whisper of it, you know" —

"Tortures — not to mention wild horses — shall never drag the secret from my lips," said Virgie briefly, whereupon Pinkie whipped off the wrapper, and discovered the daintiest little box that can be imagined. It was made of fragrant cedar — Louis had chosen the wood himself — and lined with satin; there were silver hinges and a silver padlock, and within there lay upon the crimson lining the smallest pair of creamy kid slippers that any mortal maiden, save Cinderella herself, ever wore.

"They are pretty enough to eat," said Miss Dare, — "and oh! Rosie, your own flowers on the toe, hand-painted, as I'm a living sinner."

Sure enough they were; the palest, most transparent flowers that ever bloomed, but still pink roses with their setting of green leaves, upon each tiny toe. It was as if the maker had dreamed of a rose as he worked, and the treacherous little slippers had betrayed him.

"They're just lovely, and it's a perfectly new style. I wonder where he got them," continued Miss Dare. "Who is he, Pinks? and how came he to send you *slippers?*"

"Oh! he's only a boy, Virgie; he didn't know any better."

"Very good taste for a boy, if he *must* send *slippers.* That box is too cute for anything. Eh! oh! Pinkie, NO! It *isn't* your cousin's co-operative friend, the little shoemaker!"

"He's *not* little, *any*way," murmured Pinkie guiltily, but stanchly.

Miss Dare stared blankly at her bosom friend for a moment; then a singular spasm passed over her high-bred, aquiline countenance. She covered her face with her hands, and shook with visible emotion; then, suddenly slipping to the floor, laid her head upon an ottoman and howled with mirth.

"Oh! Pinks!" she gasped, "I'm certainly going to die! Slippers! — Great Cæsar! — Were he a dairyman, he'd woo thee with pats of butter!"

"What's that?" said a voice from the door; whereat it would be hard to say which girlish heart gave the quickest throb of terror.

For there, beyond the swaying *portière,* stood, not merely Mr. Randolph, which would have been bad enough in all conscience, but also Frank, Pinkie's only remaining brother, since Harry had died at college — some said from overwork, others from over-pleasure.

"That's a very graceful attitude, Miss Virgie," said the papa genially, as Miss Dare sprang to her feet; "why change it? How are you? well, if your cheeks speak truly. And you, my little girl, many happy returns of the day. May you never be less happy and light-hearted than you are now. It did my heart good to hear your hearty laugh as I came up the stairs."

"It was Virgie laughing, not I," said Pinkie, resolving savagely in her young mind that *her* house, when she should have one, should have uncarpeted stairs, and not a *portière* from cellar to garret. "And what she was laughing at, I'm sure I can't tell. You must ask her."

"Prices' wagon left a package for you," observed Frank grimly; "I suppose it was *that*," pointing disdainfully to the box in Pinkie's hand.

"*This?*" Henry Randolph, still with his genial smile, suddenly became aware of the dainty object, took and opened it. "Very pretty indeed," he said cheerfully; "but they'll break all to pieces if they indulge in shoe-boxes in this style; and you will be short of pocket-money for a month or more, you extravagant child."

"I fear you don't exactly grasp the situation, sir," said Frank with fine scorn; "she won't waste any pocket-money on those things. It's a birthday present."

"A present, eh? well, they won't lose by it. Present and advertisement mean much the same to tradespeople."

"Not when they're as cheeky" —

"There, there, Frank, don't tease your sister! There's no cheek in the case, though, of course, a birthday is rather more personal than Christmas; but one can't expect nice discriminations from people of that class. It was meant as a delicate attention, and I wish Pinkie to accept it as such."

Upon which, Dr. Richards and Alice entered the room, to the great relief of Pinkie, who was able to sweep her "present" up in both hands, and carry it off to her own room.

Pinkie had remained in her aunt's care ever since her mother's death; an arrangement which at once set her father free to look after his business, and enabled him to add considerably to his sister's income under color of paying board for his daughter and her nurse. But for the fact that Alice's religious views continued very unsettled, Henry Randolph's mind would have been tolerably easy about his family; for Dr. Richards's influence upon his wife's faith had fully justified her brother's opposition to the marriage, and the fortune left in his hands had been multiplied twenty-fold by "judicious management." But that Pinkie should be tainted with materialism, rationalism, or socialism, would indeed have been a misfortune; and it had been with true paternal delight that her father observed her pretty little head to be too full of herself and her own affairs to leave room for any kind of "ism" whatsoever. Harry's sudden death, from causes which his father had never so much as suspected, had, however, rather shaken that gentleman's faith in his own clear-sightedness, and he had come to Micklegard for his semi-annual visit to his daughter, prepared to observe closely, and act promptly, if necessary.

Before dinner was announced, Frank found an opportunity of interviewing his father, in the bay window.

"About those slippers, sir," he said. "I'm afraid it's a serious business. The doctor and my aunt here have cockered up that little Metzerott till he thinks himself the equal of the Tsar of Russia. Those slippers are *his* work, and *his* gift" —

"My boy," said Henry Randolph kindly, "do you suppose I have been on Wall Street for twenty years without ability enough to manage one sixteen-year-old girl?"

"By George, sir, a sixteen-year-old girl" —

"As I understand it, Frank, the fellow's name is Louis, not George. Did you see this?" He held up a card, on which was daintily inscribed, "Many Birthday Wishes from Louis."

"Truly touching! the young upstart!" growled Frank.

"Just so; and you will now, perhaps, give me credit for a little discrimination. Rose has not seen this, or it would not have been left where it was — in the toe of a slipper — for *me* to find; therefore the thing is an advertisement, pure and simple; do you understand?"

"I see!" said Frank, with a smile of profound admiration.

"The boy is coming, after dinner, to give poor Fred an outing," continued this wise father; "and I particularly desire that there shall be no rudeness on your part for Pinkie to complain of, and especially no hint of any possible romance in the situation. You know your sister" —

"Yes, as obstinate as the devil when she likes, and she generally does like."

"Don't swear, Frank; it is ungentlemanly, and irreligious too. Pinkie is only a child, after all — and so is the boy, for that matter. There's no harm done yet; but, of course, I shall get her away from this as soon as possible; only, in the mean time, mind what you're about."

"No fear of me, sir, now that I know you have your eyes open."

"I usually have, my fine fellow," thought Mr. Randolph as his son left him, "and especially when I find my jeweller putting up a locket containing your picture, and marked 'Gretchen.' Humph! How came you to know what Prices' wagon left? Your old father isn't quite in his dotage, my boy."

Twelve years of ill-health had not passed over Dr. Richards without leaving some token behind them. His practice among the wealthy had fallen off almost to nothing; though a few old patients still liked him to come, when he was able, and send Dr. Harrison when he was not; but among the poor, who were only too glad to see him on any terms, he did far more than was prudent or perhaps right; though I, for one, must hesitate before casting a shadow of blame on one who spends himself for others.

"I believe that there are others for whom I ought to live," he had said long ago.

Those others! When living for one's self is almost beyond one's strength, and the weight of a grasshopper a perceptible burden involving a loss of nerve-force and vitality, living for others is a phrase that acquires new meanings every day. And visits among the very poor are of all things exhausting and disheartening to a man whose own purse is empty. Tonics, change of air, change of scene, above all — *rest* — rest of mind and body, would have saved many a life during those twelve years, while the thousands of Alice Randolph's fortune were multiplying themselves by ten and twenty. And Henry Randolph was, in his own opinion, not only a just man, but kind and generous; Frederick Richards had but to lift a finger, and his hands would have been filled with twice the amount of the original bequest.

The finger was not raised. As sternly as Elijah of old surveyed the rainless heavens, while the deeps afforded no water and the rivers were exhausted; while the suckling's tongue clave for thirst to his mouth, and the infant children cried for bread which none brake to feed them; — so sternly stood Frederick Richards beside the dying lives for which he would have given his own; but to save which he would not touch with so much as a finger the polluted millions of Henry Randolph.

Alice could not quite understand it, and, indeed, it was a position which, for one reason or another, most people will fail to appreciate. The "price of blood" even Judas was unable to spend with a light heart; and the actual spoils of a pickpocket or burglar, most of us would gladly restore to their lawful owner; but if Henry Randolph handed his sister a hundred-dollar bill, to whom, if not to him, did it rightfully belong? And since to Alice's eyes it represented, not money in the abstract, still less unlawful gains, but food, clothing, strengthening cordials, and innocent pleasures for husband and son, — and when he who offered these was her own brother, — why should she not accept them? To her it was a distinction without a difference that her husband was willing — or rather permitted her — to receive a fair amount as board for Pinkie and Nurse Annie.

"He has a right to provide for his own child," said Dr. Richards.

Alice was glad that he looked at it in that light; but she could not understand it. Hewing down the priests of Baal in the name of the Lord would have been comprehensible enough; but when Jehovah and Baal were alike empty names, one sacrifice deserved fire from heaven as well as another, it seemed to Alice.

The subject had never been a bone of contention between them; they had, it is true, once discussed it thoroughly, but dispassionately; then Alice had said, "I cannot quite understand your way of looking at it, Fred; but, of course, I shall not do anything that you disapprove of."

"That is all I ask of you, Alice," he had answered gravely.

It was indeed a virtue which most men would have felt with intense appreciation, that Alice was capable of stating her own views upon a question once for all, and, having realized those of her husband, choosing her course, and keeping silence forever thereafter. But the course he had marked out for himself was not so easy to Dr. Richards that he could dispense with the glad and hearty co-operation his wife had always been able to give him, and accept, as a full equivalent therefor, her mere passive acquiescence. It fretted him, like friction upon a raw spot, that from the numerous petty annoyances and privations that had come into her daily life, Alice knew that he could have saved her, and would not. She did not blame him; she recognized it as a question of conscience, and left it there; but the consciousness of it was ever alive and present to his thoughts.

It was little wonder that the once fair, calm face was marked by many a line and furrow, and the quiet, cheerful manner often marred by gloomy impatience.

Matters might indeed have been far worse had not Freddy's presence been about the house like an angel redeeming from all evil. He was seventeen now, and the treatment inaugurated by Dr. Harrison years ago had been so far successful that he was able to take a few steps about his room by the aid of a pair of crutches. He had long arms, and large, but well-shaped hands, white and blue-veined; and his young face, that should have been brown and rosy, was so pathetically bright, sweet, and merry, that the shrunken limbs and distorted spine appeared by contrast comparatively insignificant.

For Freddy had a wonderfully happy disposition. His soul was like a plant, turning ever from the shadow and reaching out towards every ray of light and happiness. He was very clever, too, with his pencil, and might have been a great artist, Dr. Richards thought, if his spine had been like other people's; but that view of the case had never occurred to Freddy. So, instead of repining because he was unable to cover a twenty-foot canvas with impossible scenes from historic or poetic fiction, Freddy transferred the turbid waves of his own rushing river, or the changeful clouds that swept across the sky, to graceful, smooth-lined shell or slender water-jar; while his cherub heads were sweet as those immortal angel faces of Fra Angelico.

He was waiting at the dinner-table in his old "Ark of the Covenant," which, alas! he had never outgrown; and watched with brown eyes, full of mischief, Pinkie's inspection of the parcels that lay heaped about her plate; for all the gifts had been reserved for dinner-time, since Mr. Randolph was unable to come earlier.

And, after all, the father's present was of jeweller's work, though not a "complete *parure;*" it was a dainty little watch incrusted with diamonds, and a chain of such fairy workmanship that it was hard to believe it could have been wrought by mortal fingers.

"And nothing from Freddy! You 'vage deceiver!' Then, what did you mean by ordering me out of the room, whenever you got out your paint-box and palette?"

"I wanted to surprise you, and lo! you are surprised," said Freddy, laughing. "But I've a kiss here for you, if you choose to come and get it."

"Cool you are! I'll take it by and by as a corrective to these sugar-plums."

"Bitters are best before meals," said the boy, holding out his hand so invitingly that Pinkie pushed back her chair and came around the table to his side. As his lips touched her young, fresh cheek, he murmured, "You shall have it after dinner, Rosebud; I didn't want it swamped in all that, and criticised by the whole tableful."

Pinkie replied by a patronizing pat on the brown head, and returned to her seat quite content; for it would have cut her to the heart to be slighted by the cousin who, into the brotherly habitual affection and pity that belonged to him in right of their life together and his affliction, had contrived to infuse a piquant charm of his own.

Dessert was on the table when a slender gray figure knocked at the glass door opening into the garden. It was Louis' usual entrance; for, as Freddy now occupied the doctor's offices on the ground-floor, it was more convenient to both. The back office had been turned into a bedroom, when it became difficult to manage the conveyance of the Ark up and down the stairway; the front room Freddy sat and painted in, except during office-hours, when he retired before the doctor's patients; but these, though numerous, brought so little increase to the treasury that, to any others but Frederick Richards and his son, their number would have been positively disheartening.

Henry Randolph raised his eyebrows the barest line — just a shadow of a line — as the young shoemaker entered, and, though evidently just a little disconcerted at finding the family still at table, made his apology to Alice, and accepted a chair at Freddy's side, and a portion of birthday ice-cream, as simply and easily as if his grandfather had "come over with King Charles," like the "Spanyels."

"I thought you would have finished," said Louis, "but, of course, birthday wishes take some time," and he bowed across the table to Pinkie, with a frank boyish smile. "If you are not tired of them, Miss Rose, I hope you will accept mine," continued the boy with very pretty, old-fashioned courtesy. Frank scowled, and muttered something under his breath; but Mr. Randolph, whose own manners were justly celebrated, felt his heart warm towards the young man.

"It's merely imitative, of course," he said to himself. "He has had the same training as Fred, and does the trainers credit, I must say. If he were anything but a shoemaker, — and then that confounded 'Prices,' — hot-bed of Socialism that it is! — Good wishes, Mr. Metzerott, are among those good things one can't have too much of," said Mr. Randolph, aloud and benignly.

"Thank you," said Pinkie distinctly at the same moment. She raised her eyes and gave him a long, full glance, with, perhaps, a certain consciousness in it, which had been entirely absent from his look at her; for the next moment both young faces glowed with a sudden and violent blush.

Mr. Randolph finished his ice-cream, and calmly took up his conversation with the master of the house at the very point where Louis' entrance had interrupted it.

"American art," he said, "has a great future before it; just now, of course, we are imitative — imitative! and yet we do show some symptoms of striking out a line of our own. There's Quartley, now — he's very American; and Rinehart, poor fellow!"

"I'm not a connoisseur," said Dr. Richards, "but I never saw anything sweeter than Rinehart's bust of his mother."

"Is that your favorite? Well, it's a good specimen of his best manner; individual, you know, and American. Now, there's his Clytie; she's no more Greek than I am; as why should she be? Who his model was, I'm sure I don't know; but Clytie herself is simply a beautiful American girl."

"You remember Pinkie's exclamation when she first saw his Endymion," said the doctor, smiling; "'Oh! how I should like to kiss him!'"

"Ah! exactly! 'like Dian's kiss!' There's a softness, a tenderness about his manner that's very attractive, and intensely American."

"Do you consider tenderness a prominent feature of the American character?"

"Why, we don't get the credit of it, because we cover it up with flippancy; but yes, we are tender-hearted to a fault."

"Father," said Freddy, "oh! I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Uncle Henry, but Louis has been telling me something so very interesting. Only imagine! a clergyman giving up his pulpit, and a salary of five thousand a year, because he preached Socialism. And so he has come to Prices, and means to turn carpenter there."

"He must be a fool," said Mr. Randolph.

"Appearances are against him; he is a clergyman," observed Dr. Richards.

"Nonsense, Uncle Fred; that's your agnosticism," put in Pinkie decidedly. "Who is he, Louis? and isn't he rather old to learn carpentering?"

"He *is* a carpenter," said Louis. "You always see the practical side of a subject, Miss Rose; he worked at his trade, he says, while he was studying."

"Oh! if he's that sort of a person it's not to be wondered at," observed Miss Dare, interrupting a very animated conversation with Frank, and bringing her aquiline features to bear upon the matter in hand. "It's a mere case of wallowing in the mire after being washed, don't you know."

"Do you call carpentry a wallowing in the mire?" asked Louis with sudden gravity.

Miss Dare grew scarlet. "I beg your pardon, I'm sure," she said; "I really had forgotten" —

"Had you? and why do you beg *my* pardon?" asked the boy, with some surprise; "but I always think of Him as a carpenter."

"Him?"

"Jesus Christ," said the boy, not without reverence.

There was a decided sensation around the table; for that sacred name is considered altogether *malàpropos,* and in wretched taste in good society. Then Alice said, "I don't think Miss Dare intended any reflection upon the trade of a carpenter, Louis; that was only her witty manner of speaking. What she meant was that if he were brought up a carpenter there was less wonder in his taking to the trade now."

"But it does give one a kind of shock," quoth Pinkie with candor, "to hear our Lord spoken of as a carpenter. I wonder why?"

"So do I," said her uncle. "It is very un-American."

"He was a very good carpenter, I'm sure of that," said Louis, the wistfulness growing deeper in his blue eyes.

"Do you think we had better discuss the subject?" asked Mr. Randolph with grave disapprobation; "besides, — Miss Dare, I have been wishing to ask you — how soon does your father intend returning to America?"

"Gracious knows," answered Miss Dare, with a shrug of her thin shoulders, "I don't. But, Mr. Randolph, if you hear of any one going over — any friend of yours, I mean, would you mind letting me know? Papa wants me to join him if I can hear of a good escort."

"Perhaps *I* may have the pleasure; I may take a fortnight abroad this spring."

"Papa!" cried Pinkie, "you will take me this time! You promised!"

"Well, I suppose I might as well be bothered with two girls as one," said Mr. Randolph amiably. "Your father was speaking of giving you a year or so at a French convent when I last saw him, Miss Virgie. Is that the idea at present?"

"Yes, sir; and oh! if you'd only leave Pinkie there too! I shouldn't mind it if she were along. Oh, Pinks! wot larks!"

"Ah! I fear the Sisters would take them for condors," observed the papa, with his celebrated genial laugh. "Well, I'll think it over; but don't set your hearts on it, you two."

Wherewith they rose from the table.

"Nothing could be better," mused the tender-hearted American, noting the sudden blankness of Louis' face at the proposed journey. "Her own proposal, no interference or parental tyranny on my part. And then — Dare! 'The old blood holds its own,' on Wall Street, in his case, and I'm positive he has some little game in hand there in Paris. It will do no harm to look after him. His daughter would make an excellent wife for Frank one of these days; and if the boy is up to any rascality with his lockets and things, it is just as well she should be abroad, out of the way of hearing of it. As for this other affair, there is no harm done at present, — two such children! — but it is just as well to get Pinkie out of this house with its atmosphere of free thought and Socialism. Yes, nothing could be better!"

Rendered even more genial than his wont by these reflections, the rich man paused, ere leaving the dining-room, to say to Louis, —

"My little girl has not thanked you yet for the slippers, Mr. Metzerott. I suppose they came from you, as that is your department at 'Prices.'"

"Yes," said Louis quietly, "it is my department."

"And they do you credit. Pinkie will find nothing prettier in Paris, if I decide to take her. Why, they would be just the thing, little girl, for gala days at the convent, with a white dress and veil."

"Do they wear veils? I should like to see you in one, Miss Rose," said Louis, still with that blank quietness which had so suddenly descended upon him.

"Papa," said Pinkie suddenly, "Freddy has something to show me, some of his own work. And we don't want you, papa, or Virgie; you are too learned in technique and chiar-oscuro and that, and Virgie is too satirical. Go upstairs, you two; I'll see you later."

"Don't wait for me, Mr. Randolph; I have something to say to Mr. Metzerott," said Virginia boldly. Louis was only a boy, she said to herself; besides, one need hardly stand on ceremony with that sort of people.

Thus cast off by his women-kind, Mr. Randolph had no alternative but to obey, since interference was not his cue. "Tell Pinkie not to be long, she is keeping her cousin from his ride," said the great Wall Street operator, as he left her; but Virgie was not thinking of Pinkie at all.

"I want to say, Mr. Metzerott," she said, "that I am so much obliged to you for speaking as you did, about — carpenters, you know."

"Why, I did not say anything, did I?" replied Louis, rather absently, following Pinkie with his eyes as she walked away by the side of Freddy's chair, which his father wheeled into the office.

"Oh! I know you'd rather go with them," said Virgie with the candid directness which was a part of her character; "but I've got something to say, and I mean to say it. Mr. Metzerott — or, I say, do you mind if I call you Louis?"

"No, why should I? everybody does except Mr. Randolph; and he — oh! I don't suppose he meant to make fun of me."

"Humph!" said the astute Virginia. "But never mind what he meant, *I* know his tricks and his manners. Louis, what you said was this, that you always thought of our Lord as a carpenter. Now, does that mean that you think of Him often? a bright, handsome boy like you! because *I* don't, not more than once a week, on Sundays, you know; and yet girls, — one would think a girl had more time!"

"It's while we're at work," answered the boy; "oh! I have plenty of time, Miss Dare. My father is a very silent man. When he does talk, what he says is well worth hearing; but he don't talk much when we're at work; and so I think of things then."

"Things! do you mean our Lord?"

"Him, yes; and of Washington and Bonaparte; and our own Hermann, who fought the Romans; and Fra Angelico and Titian, and — oh! I couldn't tell you half," said Louis, smiling. "I'm here about every day, you know; and Fred and I talk about things and people; heroes and great artists, and all sorts of things. Fred believes that Jesus Christ was really God, you know, and so is alive still."

"And don't you?"

"No: I wish I did, but I can't. I love Him, you know; I'd rather be like Him than any of those men I told you of; but I can't *feel* Him, like Fred."

"*Feel* Him; what do you mean?"

"Why, Fred says that sometimes, when he is suffering, he knows Jesus Christ is in the room, close by him; closer than any of us."

"And that makes him always so bright and happy," said Virgie under her breath.

"I suppose so; it would, you know. I'd change with Fred, spine and all, to feel so, — I know that. Well, I'd change with him anyway, if I could, and he'd like it; but you can't make yourself feel, can you?"

"Wouldn't you just as soon leave the feeling to other people, sometimes?" asked Miss Dare, relapsing into frivolity without the slightest warning. "Never mind, Louis, if he does take her abroad to get her out of your way; fathers are not always as clever as they think themselves, and I won't let her forget you."

"I think she hardly could," returned the boy, with a troubled smile; "we have known each other all our lives."

"Well, here she comes, and I'll do as I would be done by, and make myself scarce. That's a Christian maxim, anyway."

Louis turned quickly to meet his friend, with an eager face. "I could not come," he said, "I was kept — but you have it? he gave it to you?"

Pinkie glanced down at a tile she carried in her hand. "Yes, he gave it to me," she said.

"But I want to ask you, Pinkie — oh! I ought to say Miss Rose, but I've called you Pinkie all my life; — she says, Miss Dare says, that your father will take you to Paris to get you away from *me*. Pinkie, do you want to go?"

"That's all Virgie's nonsense," said Pinkie decidedly; "he'd better not play stern parent, and he knows it. Yes, Louis, I do want to go; to see the ocean, and Paris, and all. Of course I want to go."

"If you would enjoy it," said Louis reluctantly, "we would try to bear it, Freddy and I. But we should miss you, Pinkie, *liebes Herz*," he added tenderly.

"Well, you know I'd be back in two years," said Pinkie, blushing slightly, though really it was hardly worth while to blush for Louis; a mere child, and a shoemaker at that.

"If your father wants to get you away from me," said Louis, "it may be two years or ten. Will he like you to have my picture, Pinkie?"

"He *ought* to," said that young lady, a mischievous dimple showing itself at the corner of her rosy mouth. "It's in Freddy's best manner, tender, individual, and American, *very* American."

Louis smiled, though he would rather have seen Pinkie more respectful to her genial papa; but he had not been acquainted with that young lady for twelve long years without having learned the futility of remonstrance. His arm was around her by this time, and he was stroking back the rough, brown curls from her brow. It was much such a caress as Freddy might have bestowed; for, as Henry Randolph had said, they were both mere children.

"And did the slippers fit?" he said. "Annie Rolf painted them; but not half well enough for you, *mein Röslein roth.*"

Pinkie drew away from him rather abruptly. "Were he a dairyman, he'd woo thee with pats of butter," said Virginia's voice in her ear. Pinkie hated herself for the thought; and she loved Louis as well as at that stage of her development she was capable of loving; but she drew away from him notwithstanding.

"They are pretty enough for a queen," she said; "and your father always fits me; or did you make them all yourself? But you know, Louis, I told you, we are not children now, and" —

"It is your birthday," said Louis, "and you will be far away on mine, perhaps. You might kiss me for my birthday, Pinkie, and another for our good-by. I do love you so very dearly."

Pinkie looked doubtful for a moment; but her heart was soft and young, and Louis was very handsome. Besides, it suddenly occurred to her that her father would strenuously object to any such proceeding; whereupon the dairyman and his pats of butter vanished from her mind.

"Just one, then," she said with a demure, naughty little smile.

Louis was quite equal to the occasion.

"One on your lips," he said, suiting the action to the word in obedience to Shakespeare, "and one on each cheek, my pink rose. And then, your brown eyes are so pretty, you would not have them slighted, I know; and this white forehead was just made to be kissed. But I like the rosy lips best, after all, *allerliebste*," concluded Louis, with great simplicity.

Whereupon Pinkie amazed him by clinging to his neck, which was almost out of her reach, she was such a tiny little thing; and bursting into sudden tears. She was much less simple and innocent than he, — perhaps, under our present system of education, it is impossible for a girl to be thoroughly innocent and perfectly simple, — and, though the word marriage had not been openly named between them, Pinkie knew that Louis looked upon her as his; his so entirely that there was scarcely need to speak of it. Besides, they were too young, every one would laugh at them; but when he should be twenty-one, thought poor Louis —

Pinkie loved no one so well, not her father, nor Freddy. She had, in her naughty childhood, always been good with Louis; and his power over her now was almost unlimited when they were together; but yet —

She drew away from him again, and dried her eyes. "There's nothing the matter," she said in answer to his alarmed inquiries, "only that I am foolish, and that papa will ask why I have been crying. Let me go; I must bathe my eyes before he sees them."

She ran lightly up the stairs, then by a sudden impulse turned, ran down again, and threw her arms about his neck. "I do love you, Louis," she said; "and I don't care what they do to me, if they keep me in a cellar on bread and water, with *rats* — yes, Louis, *rats* — running over my feet, I'll never forget you, never, *never*."

"You couldn't, Pinkie, *mein Röslein*, nor I you, you could *not* forget me," he said as he had answered Virginia, when suddenly Pinkie tore herself away, and vanished like summer lightning. Louis turned to meet the eyes of Dr. Richards.

"You are both such children," said that gentleman, "that it is no use to scold, far less to warn you. But, Louis, did you never hear the story of Cinderella?"

"Many a time, sir."

"There is a new version of the story, my boy. The modern Cinderella is a princess, the daughter of a money-king, and her lover a poor shoemaker. The slippers were his workmanship, and had a fairy power to test her truth, and — Louis — when she wore them, and thought of him as he was — no, not that, but as he appeared; for he was a prince at heart, but a shoemaker by trade, — then, Louis, her fine raiment and her glittering equipage vanished, and she appeared to those who understood her only a poor cinder girl, sitting among the ashes that had ruined a thousand lives to enrich one."

"And therefore she left the ashes, and came to her lover in her rags," said Louis, smiling proudly.

"Do you think so?" said the doctor. "Well, well, after all you are only children, and have kissed each other many a time. She will go to Paris" —

"— And come home again," said Louis.

While Pinkie, as she packed away the pretty china tile with the fair young face upon it, murmured to herself, "There's no good in showing it to Virgie, she would laugh; and as for papa, it is none of his business. But oh! Louis, if only you were anything but a shoemaker!"

CHAPTER V.

"Das Ding-an-Sich."

It was with a heart that knew not whether to be sad or joyful that Louis returned home on that eventful afternoon, upon which he had made such a stride in his young life. Pinkie's brown eyes had been his lights to rule the day and the night, since either of them could remember; her rosy, audacious, mutinous little face was part and parcel of his very consciousness. Yet, perhaps, just because he could not imagine himself without her, his imagination had never risen to picturing his life *with* her — at Prices. She was simply his; there was neither past, present, nor future to their life together; only one beautiful, glorious, eternal now.

Upon this state of mind the thought of separation had acted as the jar which was all that was needful to produce crystallization, a jar which any other event might at any moment have supplied; so that the money-king had after all been wise in his day and generation.

But the electricity evolved in the crystallization had given poor Louis a rather severe shock. He had been accustomed to look upon "Prices" as the brief epitome of the time, the picture in little of that which the world ought to be. But as he re-entered it now, late in the afternoon, it seemed strangely altered. The great dining-hall stretched blackly before him; the long lines of tables seeming to reach out to infinity, and the pale windows glimmering like a vanished hope.

Miss Sally met him in the corridor.

"You're late, Louis," she said, "and that ain't usual. Have you had your supper? You don't mean you went out without your overcoat! Don't you know these March days ain't to be trusted? Why, you're as pale as a ghost."

"I'm all right, Aunt Sally," replied the boy patiently. "I didn't need my overcoat. Yes, I had my supper at Dr. Richards's."

"It's as little as they could do to give you your supper, after you'd been wheeling their son about all the afternoon," observed Polly.

"I liked it," said Louis, "and they like to have me to tea. It wasn't to economize, Aunt Polly, on their side or mine."

"It had the same effect, though," said Polly, looking up with a laugh from the great account-book before her; for Miss Sally had drawn him into her own little sitting-room, the room where Susan Price had died. "What you saved on your supper will help to pay your absence fine."

It was entirely true, and perfectly disinterested in Polly, who was, besides, of twice — nay, ten times — the value to her kind that Rose Randolph was ever likely to be. Yet Louis, hearing now with Pinkie's ears, as he had seen the great dining-hall with her eyes, turned away sick at heart.

"Is the father at home?" he asked.

"There's a board-meeting to-night. He's there. I suppose it'll be settled about that carpenter's place. Your father has taken such a fancy to Mr. Clare, Louis. He says he is the very man we want. I don't know how he knows."

"I don't know how *I* know," said Louis, "but I do. I think one always does," he added, so sadly that the women looked at each other meaningly.

"You are tired to death," said Sally, "that's what's the matter; and there's nothing going on to-night to brighten you up. For a wonder the Hall ain't been lit, and for another the director is at home, playing on the pianner like mad. You might go to his rooms and have a little music, Louis; that would do you good."

"I think I'll go to bed," said Louis, smiling faintly. "I heard the Herr Musik-Direktor as I came up; he was playing 'Tannhäuser,' and I don't think I could appreciate Wagner to-night. I'll go to bed, Aunt Sally."

"Well, so do; but, Louis, by the way, I don't suppose you saw anything of Gretchen Schaefer?"

"Gretchen? no; that is, not since dinner-time. Why?" asked Louis, with his hand on the knob.

"She was absent at supper, without leave or notice, and hasn't been seen since. I am afraid Tina has had a bad turn, that's all. Gretchen would not do such a thing unless she had to."

"Shall I step around and see?"

"No: you're tired. I'll go myself. I ain't had a breath of air to-day, outside the back yard, and it'll do me good. Polly, there, has the accounts to do. They ought to been ready for the board-meeting; but Gretchen she's been so put back in her work lately by Tina's bein' sick."

"I've nearly done," said Polly, with a vigorous dip of her pen in the inkstand; "and if you're not too tired, Louis, you might wait and leave these books at the board-room, as you go to bed. It's as near as any other way, and I promised to send them."

The boy threw himself obediently into a chair, and watched — still with Pinkie's eyes — while Miss Sally adorned herself with a bonnet and shawl of strange and intricate construction. How the brown eyes would have laughed at Miss Sally's bonnet, thought Louis.

Then Polly closed her books with a bang. "There, that's done!" she said. "The Bible says we must bear one another's burdens; and I've had my share of it this day. I hate accounts."

"Let me do them for you next time," said Louis, looking down at Polly's flushed face and tumbled hair, and the soiled gingham apron she had been too busy to change.

"I hope there won't *be* a next time," replied Polly. "If there is, we must get another cashier; that's all. But Gretchen is real reliable generally."

"I hope nothing has happened to her," said Louis uneasily, thinking of two figures that had vanished round a corner in North Micklegard, as the Ark of the Covenant drew nigh. The man was, he felt sure, Frank Randolph, and the girl had on a blue dress, just the color of Gretchen's Sunday one.

"Oh! nothing ever happens to Gretchen," said Polly, laughing. "Tina is the one I'm anxious about."

"So?" said the boy slowly. Twenty-four, nay, twelve hours earlier he would have spoken at once of the blue dress; but — after all, there were plenty of blue dresses in the world; — and — then — *were* classes so widely separated in America, — Republican America, that — Louis shrunk from formulating, even to himself, the thought in his mind.

He took the books, and carried them away in silence.

His modest tap at the door of the board-room was answered by a summons to enter; and when he deposited his burden upon the plain, deal table, with its covering of oilcloth, round which the managers sat upon much worn wooden chairs, — for there was little effort at luxury at "Prices," — there was not a face in the room but wore a smile to greet him. They were gray-haired men, all of them, who had known him all his life, and they could not let him go without a pleasant word.

"Have you turned book-keeper, Herr Louis?" asked one. "We missed you at supper-time," said another. "Ah! he was better employed, perhaps! I hope she is pretty." "Did you give her a good hug and a sounding kiss?" "Ah! leave that to him, he knows very well how these things are managed." "He has a face to help him better with the girls than any of your advice."

These were some of the things that were said to him before his father broke in roughly, "Hold your tongues, all of you! would you quite turn the boy's head? What does it matter, a face! Hands are what we need in shoemaking."

"The boy looks tired," said the old president gently; "and you are all wrong, *meine Herren*. He has been doing works of charity, not courting. I saw you up-town, Louis, with your lame friend."

"Yes, he enjoyed the ride," said Louis. "I am glad to be of use to him, Herr President; they have all been so kind to me."

"Quite right, my boy," said the old man benignly; and, after a few more words, Louis took his leave.

For perhaps the first time in his life he stepped into the elevator; he who usually ran up the long, steep stairs as fleetly as a gazelle. Then, reaching his own little room, under the roof, he sat down, slowly and heavily, and looked about him. It was spotlessly clean, but with no attempt at beauty, except one or two of Freddy's drawings; and, to the boy's new sense of sight, repulsively bare and comfortless. He let his head sink hopelessly upon his hands. Look where he would, there was no place at "Prices" for Pinkie. With his best efforts he could not think her into his workaday world. It was not her fault, of course; the hardy *arbor vitæ* stands erect amidst the snows from which the rose must be carefully protected. Is the rose to blame?

No, it is only a question of corresponding with one's environment. Pinkie was, clearly and self-evidently, not created or evolved to correspond with any such environment as "Prices."

He was sitting in the same position when his father entered, half an hour later, with an elate expression, which changed suddenly at sight of Louis' smile; an old smile on a boyish face.

"So!" said Karl Metzerott; "but it is my blame for sending you as a child among those people! Ah! what a fool I was! What has she done to thee, Louis, to send thee home with a face like that?"

"It is not her fault, father, nor mine, nor any one's, for that matter."

"Tell me that! Nothing is *her* fault at thy age, Louis. Tell me about it, and let me be the judge. Have I not always warned thee? A man's own senses might tell him that a bit of pink and white wax-work is not the wife for a working-man."

Louis sighed. "It is true," he said. "Father, I have thought and thought, but I cannot imagine her *here*, — or — myself anywhere else. For see! I have grown up at 'Prices,' father; these dear friends are *my* friends, part of my life; if I could leave it, only half of my heart could go with me; if I could rise into her world" —

"Rise? that is, lie, cheat, steal, do anything to get money! For it is money alone that makes equals in that world, my boy; have I not seen it?"

Louis bowed his head once more in sad acquiescence. His thoughts were too chaotic for words, but he felt dimly and confusedly that his father was right. Polly's mercenariness was a nobler thing than Pinkie's scorn of expense; nay, if he had known it, even the rough raillery of the board-room, quite as delicate as much schoolgirl teasing. "Prices" might be — was — in essentials the higher world; but since it was not Pinkie's world the result was practically the same. Louis glanced around the plain, bare room, and thought of Alice's dainty parlor, of the pink and white nest that sheltered his bird, of which he had once had an accidental glimpse, — and he sighed heavily.

"Why *should* you fancy her here?" asked Metzerott, interpreting the sigh aright. "She doesn't suit you, and that's all there is about it. Rise into her world indeed! I hope your father is an honest man, which is more than can be said of hers!"

"Oh! if you come to fathers!" said Louis proudly. "But there's more in it than that, if I could only make you see it. I've been brought up in both worlds, father, and I know. Ours — yes, we are working for each other at 'Prices,' while in hers they work for themselves; that makes us higher; yet in some ways they are higher than us."

"They've more money," said his father scornfully, "and finer clothes" —

"Not Mrs. Richards," said Louis; "but it's in things money won't buy that I see the difference. I can't put it into words, but you would understand it, father, if you could see Mrs. Richards standing beside — Aunt Sally, for instance. They are equally good, perhaps, and I love them equally well, so it's a good example. It's not Pinkie's fault, father, it's just because hers is a different world."

"Was she so unkind to you to-day?"

"Far from it," said the boy, a deep flush rising to his fair brow; "but her father — I think because of me — will take her to Paris, and put her into a convent-school. I only saw her a little while, for he took her for a drive, and to supper at his hotel; but — she loves me, father."

"Does she?" said Karl Metzerott. "But I dare say she does. Poor girl, poor girl."

He was too wise to say any more. Louis was, he saw, fully alive to the situation, and comment would only wound without helping him. But he was inwardly relieved at the escape from this trouble promised by the Parisian school, which would, he persuaded himself, effectually put an end to the whole affair. They were only children, and would be in love half a dozen times apiece before they were married.

Yet — Louis was his own son, — his who had "loved one woman only," and clave to her in death as in life. And how dared Henry Randolph scorn his boy, his noble, beautiful Louis, worth a hundred little gypsies, such as the one on whom he had set his young heart? With these mixed and contradictory emotions struggling in his bosom, Karl Metzerott stood for some moments with folded arms, looking down upon his son. Suddenly he laid one large, rough, toil-worn hand very softly upon the bowed head.

"Don't break thy heart for her, Louis," he said; "there's not a woman in the world — *now* — worth that."

"Ah! *now*," said Louis. "Was there ever, father?"

"Never," replied the shoemaker sturdily. "Did I break my heart for thy mother — yet if ever woman *were* worth — but I lived on, and not quite for nothing, *nicht wahr?*"

"You had me," said Louis, springing to his feet, and clasping like a child his father's brown neck; "you had me, and I have you. We won't break our hearts while we have each other, father."

CHAPTER VI.

"AN ENEMY CAME AND SOWED TARES."

HENRY RANDOLPH was not a man to let the grass grow under his feet, when he had once made up his mind to a certain definite course. Most of his successes on Wall Street had been won by prompt and decided action; and within a week from the moment when he had decided that Pinkie's intimacy with the "little shoemaker" must be broken off, he, she, and Miss Dare were on the high seas.

During the short interval before their departure, Louis never once saw Pinkie alone, by what he considered a series of unfortunate chances; which the young lady more acutely ascribed to the silent watchfulness of uncle, aunt, father, and brother. Freddy would have been heart and soul on the side of the lovers, if they had been sufficiently of one mind to possess anything that, by the utmost stretch of partisan spirit, could be called a side at all. As it was, he was ready at any moment to further any plan or project that Louis might devise; and Louis was too young and too much in love not to long and innocently to scheme for a repetition of that last interview, with its tears and tenderness.

But such schemes as his were by no means difficult to see through and quietly frustrate; nor in truth could any one of the relatives on either side have been justly blamed for wishing that their mutual inclination, innocent and beautiful as it was, should die a natural death.

Perhaps it was a laudable desire to foster his daughter's good qualities, to enlist her pride on the right side, and appeal silently to her common sense by showing her Louis' daily life, that brought Mr. Randolph from his hotel quite early one morning, with a proposition to spend the day in a visit to "Prices."

"Of course we've all been there," he said, "but I, for one, only know one or two shops and departments, here and there. What I wish to do is to understand the working of the whole institution; for I may see others while we are abroad, and, by knowing the peculiarities of this one, might bring home valuable hints."

"Then you'd better go alone," said Pinkie, who always smelt a scheme when her papa became explanatory; "you can't study workings at a picnic."

"But I particularly wish you to go," said Mr. Randolph. "Co-operation has come to stay, Pinkie, and, as a woman who will inherit considerable wealth, it is your duty to know all about it. Besides, I have already invited your friend Miss Dare to accompany us. I stopped at her house on my way down, and promised that the carriage should call for her in an hour's time."

Miss Dare! Virgie! who was by no means averse to an occasional *tête-à-tête* with Louis, or in fact anything else masculine that came in her way. Pinkie concluded that she would go, and revenged herself by wearing her very prettiest "spring suit," of pearl-gray and rose-color, in which she felt quite able to hold her own against any Dare that ever breathed.

"We'll give the day to it, and dine there," said Mr. Randolph with benevolent airiness. "Of course it will be rather primitive; but we can stand it well enough for one day. If they stick their knives in the butter, it won't matter to us, so it isn't *our* butter."

"Oh! do they do such things as that?" said Miss Dare with a shudder.

It was a warm day, a very warm day for the end of March; consequently the furnaces at "Prices" were several degrees hotter than usual. The shoemaker's work-room, what with this heat, the smell of leather, and the presence of six overheated human beings, was stifling to a degree scarcely bearable to Louis' youthful vitality. His hand, blackened with work and the soots of Micklegard, had several times brushed away the drops from his forehead, not without leaving traces of the operation; his face was pale, and his fair hair disordered; when suddenly a breath of cooler air made him look up, and there in the doorway, fresh and sweet as her own royal flower, stood Pinkie, as though fallen from heaven.

What happened next, Louis could never afterwards clearly recollect. Did he spring towards her? or was it only that his heart gave one glad, strong leap, to sink again heavy as lead — nay, heavy as sorrow and loneliness and a loveless old age — before the scorn, the horrified disgust upon her fair young face? In truth, Pinkie was to be pitied far more than he. An atmosphere of dainty, fastidious refinement may be best for one's moral lungs; but it is surely not one of its consequences to prevent us from distinguishing the "*Ding-an-sich*" from mere phenomena. Such blindness is due to a spiritual indigestion, one would imagine, caused by — ah! who shall say by what admixture of mortal clay with the Bread of Life!

As in a dream, Louis went blindly on with his work, not of cream-hued kid and fairy-like proportions. It was a huge, heavy workman's shoe into the sole of which he drove peg after peg, with such fierce, unconscious energy. There were words passing, something about permission to inspect the establishment, and a guide; then a whisper from Fritz Rolf, who sat beside him, to which he replied, without understanding it, by a shake of the head. Then he heard Fritz's gay voice offering himself as a guide, in right, as he averred, of being one of the original founders; and then all were gone, and only the monotonous tap, tap, sounded again around him.

It seemed scarcely five minutes, though in fact nearly three hours had passed, and he had never worked better or faster, when Karl Metzerott rose, and said gruffly that he supposed they were all quite ready to dine with the aristocrats. In a second the men were gone; but Karl lingered to say slowly, —

"As for you, Louis" —

"I shall go to dinner," said the boy, looking up with wide, bright eyes, dry lips, and burning cheeks. "You are not ashamed of me, father?"

The man gave a short, angry laugh.

"I should be," he said, "if I saw you running after a girl who turns up her nose at your working clothes, and kisses you in your Sunday coat. She's not worth a thought, Louis."

"I have thought of her all my life," the boy said simply; "but don't speak of it, please, papa."

"That way it sinks deeper," the shoemaker said, as one who knew. They washed their hands, and drew on their coats, in the wash-room, between their rooms and the carpenter shop, and serving the use of both; and so it happened that Louis entered the dining-room with Ernest Clare's arm over his shoulders.

"There's that handsome man again," said Miss Dare, who had not disdained the explanations of such a fine young fellow as Fritz Rolf.

"Didn't you tell us he was of noble birth?"

"Lineal descendant of Richard de Clare, Earl of Pembroke, surnamed Strongbow," replied Fritz. "Louis found it in the history-book, and told me. I'm not a scholar myself," he added agreeably.

"I never could remember history," replied Miss Dare, "it's such stupid stuff, but if he was an *earl — !*"

"He conquered Ireland, and was an awful rebel; ought to have been hanged, only he wasn't," observed Pinkie succinctly.

"And now we see why," said Mr. Randolph; "he was spared to be the ancestor of our friend the carpenter."

"Do you really believe that, papa?"

Henry Randolph waved the matter aside with a pleasant smile. "Well," he said, "I never knew an Irishman who wasn't descended from one king or another, and there were certainly plenty to choose from. Besides, what does it matter? The sooner you girls learn that blood is absolutely valueless in America, the better off you will be."

As he spoke, they had been slowly approaching their table, which, not without malice prepense on Mr. Randolph's part, was very near that called after the "Founders," with which and the "Parsons' Table" it formed a triangle; and as the speech ended they were sufficiently near for Karl Metzerott to glance around with what I refrain from calling a scowl.

"*Nicht wahr,* Herr Metzerott?" said the millionnaire blandly.

"Blood?" growled the shoemaker, declining promptly to converse with Henry Randolph in German; English was good enough for *him,* — "blood? well, I've seen the time when I wanted it, — wanted it bad, too; gallons of it; I can't say that it is absolutely valueless."

"Sure, I wance knowed a man that had too much of it," said Father McClosky, his brogue more obtrusive than usual, in honor of the distinguished guests, "and it wint to his head, bad luck to it! and killed him with the appleplexy."

There was a general laugh, as the groups divided and seated themselves. Mr. Randolph did not exert, during the meal, all those conversational powers for which he was so justly celebrated. Perhaps he was tired, after three hours of statistics; for he had gone very thoroughly, as he had promised, into the "workings" of "Prices;" and his note-book contained neat rows of figures and cabalistic signs furnished him by the heads of departments. "Perhaps I may bring you home some ideas from abroad," he had said, genuinely surprised to find that the promise was not received with enthusiasm. In fact, Frau Anna Rolf, the head of the clothing department, which included dress-making, tailors', and milliners' shops, had replied somewhat curtly that there were ideas in plenty at "Prices." What they needed was means to carry them out, and room to grow.

"Why, how much more room do you want?" Pinkie had asked rather pettishly. "I never saw such a big place as this."

"America is a bigger place," Frau Anna had answered, with her solemn, gloomy eyes burning upon the girl's young face; "America is bigger, and so is the world."

Then Mr. Randolph had pressed her shoulder significantly, and Pinkie had said no more.

From the point of view of a party of pleasure, Pinkie's day had not been a success. She had been shocked and disgusted, frightened, and, always and above all, thoroughly and intensely bored. The number of barrels of flour consumed a week, the sale for jewelry, above all, the prices of leather and the demand for shoes, — what was all this to Pinkie, aged sixteen, and on the verge of a trip to Paris, but a weariness of the flesh? "Prices" had presented its least attractive face to the little heiress, that morning, not, perhaps, without the knowledge and consent of her wise papa. But at dinner Mr. Randolph indulged himself in a well-earned silence. The humors of the dining-hall could, he felt, be safely left to the conduct of Miss Dare, whose pale, prominent eyes seemed everywhere at once, while the low-toned sarcasms flowed on as unceasingly as Tennyson's "Brook."

"Girls, girls! don't laugh at these good people! They will see you, and feel hurt," interposed at gentle intervals the Machiavelli of rough-running love-affairs.

Pinkie was not anxious about the feelings of "these good people." Louis was sitting not a dozen feet from her, beside a sweet, gentle-faced girl, who seemed to absorb more of his attention than his dinner. Moreover, his color was unusually bright, which gave him a very cheerful and animated appearance; and Pinkie felt that if any one at "Prices" had any feelings at all, it would be a satisfaction to wound them as deeply as possible. Meanwhile there were eyes to see and hearts to remember at every table around, and many an ill seed, to bear fruit an hundred-fold thereafter, was sown amid girlish laughter, during that short half-hour.

"Well," asked Karl Metzerott as he rose from the table, "have you finished your inspection? or do you want that boy of mine again this afternoon?"

"Thanks, I think we have seen everything," replied the guest in his courteous manner; "I hope the interruption has not been a serious annoyance to you!"

"Well, good workmen don't grow on trees, and we have plenty of work on hand," said the shoemaker.

"Ah!" affirmatively, yet somehow conveying to the shoemaker that he had been a bear. "I assure you the morning has been one both of pleasure and profit to me; but I want to ask you just one question. Are you a Socialist?"

"I'm a Socialist bred and a Socialist born, and when I'm dead there's a Socialist gone," replied the shoemaker with grim humor.

"And you would like to see the United States of America one great commune?"

"I *intend* to see it."

"Then don't you see that such institutions as 'Prices,' by making the workingman more contented, and his life an easier one, are really defeating your own object?"

"*He* don't," said Father McClosky, indicating Mr. Clare, whose blue eyes suddenly flamed up; "but, then, he never argues."

"It depends upon what Mr. Metzerott's object is," said the carpenter parson quietly. "As I understand it, 'Prices' took its rise in the endeavor to make life not only easier but possible to those whose name it bears. If the Commune come, or *when* it comes, 'Prices' will be found to have done good work in training citizens for it; meanwhile, life *is* made easier for hundreds."

"Didn't I say so?" cried the priest triumphantly. "He never argues, he only convinces."

"Yet I am sorry to say that I am still unconvinced," said the rich man, smiling. "History is against you, Mr. Clare. A people never rebel until their wrongs have become unbearable; take the French Revolution, for example, or even our own, a hundred years ago. I hope you don't pretend that the American workingman is oppressed as the French peasant was."

"My friend has told you that I never argue," replied Ernest Clare, smiling, "certainly not here, with you, and on that subject."

"I see no objection," was Mr. Randolph's reply, "for I consider the American workingman exceptionally well off. And as to wrong" —

"Oh, papa, what does it matter? Rights or wrongs, who cares?" cried Pinkie despairingly; "you have smothered me with bales of cloth, and stifled me with barrels of sugar and bags of coffee, all the morning; but when it comes to the American workingman, I can stand it no longer; *my* wrongs become unbearable and I rebel."

"So you take no interest in working-people?" asked Karl Metzerott meaningly.

Rosalie Randolph looked at him with eyes of haughty surprise.

"Not the slightest," she said distinctly.

"Ah! your interest is reserved for your dolls as yet, my dear," said her indulgent papa; "public affairs will come later. Good-morning then, Mr. Metzerott; thank you very much for your kindness. Mr. Clare, I am glad you did *not* convince me, as at present I feel inclined to assist 'Prices' to the best of my ability, and yet I object to the Commune. A 'divide' is the last thing I should crave."

"It would be the last thing you'd *get*, in all probability," growled Metzerott, "except" —

"'*Les aristocrates à la lanterne*, eh?'" said the millionnaire, with his glorious laugh. "Well, the best dog will probably find his way to the top, as usual. Friend Fritz, may I speak to you a moment?"

"You have been very kind and polite," continued the millionnaire courteously, when he had drawn Fritz aside from the rest, "and I should like to feel that you would not be a loser by it. Is there any favor I can do for you?"

"Well," said Fritz, after a moment's thought, "there's nothing mean about me; so if you should happen to stray into a railroad office, and see a pass to New York lying about handy, why, I don't know but I might find use for it."

"You shall have it; that is, if I have the influence I ought to have. For two?"

"Well, yes; in case of a bridal tour, you know," said the young man, laughing.

Henry Randolph slapped him on the shoulder genially. "It's that pretty Miss Gretchen, I'll bet a cookie," he said. "I saw how it was this morning; if I hadn't, the young ladies would have opened my eyes. Let me know in time, and I'll send you a bridal present from Paris."

"I will, for a fact," said Fritz Rolf.

Mr. Randolph was sincerely glad to hear that Gretchen had so good a guardian as this wide-awake young Fritz. Frank was to be left in Micklegard as manager of the Randolph nail-mill, a position which he had, in fact, filled to the satisfaction of everybody but the hands, for several years. For he had a good business head, and much of his father's "luck" at turning an honest penny, though he was by no means so popular as his genial sire.

But did it never occur to this same courteous, genial, warm-hearted gentleman, who wished so exceedingly well to everybody, that an outspoken warning, either to his son, to Gretchen, or to her friends, might possibly have been in place?

CHAPTER VII.

GRADUAL ENFRANCHISEMENT.

"If the Commune come, or *when* it comes," said Dr. Richards; "and meanwhile 'Prices' is acting as training-school, eh? I should like to make Mr. Clare's acquaintance, Louis. Suppose you tell him that my old enemy, rheumatism, has me by the heels again, so that it is impossible for me to call upon him, and ask him to come and dine with us on Sunday. I'd write a note if I could hold a pen; or you might write for me, Alice."

"He's not one to stand on ceremony if he thought you really wanted him to come," replied Louis. "Don't bother Mrs. Richards. I'll tell him."

"And the little priest," said Dr. Richards, "Father McClosky. I don't know a more well-meaning little man; bring him along, my boy. And Harrison and his son" —

"Do you feel quite able for such a large party, Fred?" asked Mrs. Richards gently. She was sewing diligently, and her face had a careworn look, which deepened as her husband enumerated his guests, in a way that did not escape at least one pair of watchful, tender eyes.

"If it puts you out, my dear," returned her husband, somewhat testily — he was in his great arm-chair, poor man! unable to put a foot to the ground or move a finger without pain — "if it puts you out at all — but I don't see how it can. Just order the whole dinner bodily from 'Prices,' and have done with it."

Mrs. Richards gave a rather difficult smile. The rules at "Prices" involved strictly cash payments, and cash was just now by no means a drug in the market. But she could not give this reason to her husband.

"There doesn't seem to be much object," she said instead, "in asking persons to dine, and ordering exactly the dinner they would have at home."

"That can't possibly apply to the Harrisons; but if you are too high-toned to ask a carpenter to your house" —

"She don't mind a shoemaker," interposed Louis, smiling. "Dr. Harrison and Mr. Edgar are pretty sure to drop in during the afternoon, you know, doctor; and don't you think you could study Mr. Clare to better advantage if you had him all to himself?"

"Oh! we couldn't spare Father McClosky," said Alice, with a grateful glance at the boy; "he is so merry and good-humored, he puts new life into one."

"I believe you two are in league," grumbled the doctor. "Whatever one of you says the other one swears to."

He would have been thoroughly convinced of it had he been present at an interview that took place between them before Louis went home that night.

"What we are to do, how we are to manage, Louis, I really can't see," said poor Alice. "The doctor has some bills out, but I can't say when they will be paid, and, until then, I have literally not a penny — that I can use — except what I can earn by the sewing you got for me to do."

"Frau Anna can give you as much as you want," replied Louis; "her department is doing a big business just now. I hope you won't be angry, Mrs. Richards, but I talked matters over with Miss Sally, and she made some very practical suggestions."

"Did she!" replied Alice rather coldly; but Louis was not easily discouraged, and went on to say that Miss Sally had averred that dealing at "Prices" was no economy unless one made a thorough job of it. "Buying a cake here and a loaf of bread there is all nonsense," Miss Sally had said; "let her shut up her kitchen and discharge her cook, and she'll see the difference."

"It will save work as well as money," said Louis. "By the by, should you mind if Freddy could get some work to do?"

"Freddy! what could he do, poor boy!"

"Well," replied Louis, reddening deeply, "it seems that the slippers I — we — made for — for — Miss Randolph were very much admired. Miss Dare ordered a pair just like them before she left, to be sent after her to Paris, but her mother will pay for them; and at least twenty pairs have been ordered since then, for Commencement slippers. Annie Rolf, you know, works in the pottery, in the decorating-room; and of course hasn't time for such a job as that; and if Freddy could do it, we could get a good price for him, for the extra work, and it would be a great accommodation to us."

"Freddy will be delighted," said Alice quietly; "and — you know what a help the money will be, Louis." She stroked the fair hair from his brow with a motherly touch, thinking how much older and paler he had grown in these last weeks. But Alice did not know how her own troubles had helped Louis. His was the temperament to resist the first force of any shock, and sink beneath the consequent re-action. He had not resented or despised Pinkie's scorn, for there was no anger in his heart towards her; but he had rallied his forces to the defence of a life, a world, which he felt intuitively were in essentials, in aim and possibility, nobler and purer than that from which she ventured to look down upon him. Only when she was far away did he realize that hope, light, and color had gone out of his life so utterly as is only possible at eighteen. Then, he had one day found Alice in tears, and, when his tender questioning had drawn her troubles from her, Louis had gained a new object to live for.

So now when she said, "I don't know what I should do without you, Louis," he clasped and kissed her like a son.

"I don't believe I could have loved my own mamma better than I do you," he said; "why can't I work for you as a son would do?"

But Alice shook her head. Not while they could keep body and soul together in any other way, she said, and perhaps she judged rightly as to what was best for herself, though Louis' suggestion might have been best for him. But one cannot receive benefits involving money — or often confer them — under our present social system, without certain moral deterioration; it will be different when the next development of the kingdom has made it impossible to look upon one's own things without looking also on the things of others.

Louis did not know, however, of the one Tantalus-drop in Alice's cup. Henry Randolph, upon leaving home, had been careful to inform her of a very liberal sum of money which lay in bank subject to her order. She had told her husband of it; for it was very bitter to her to be obliged to conceal from him even a thought; and — he had left her at liberty to do as she would.

"A useless wretch like me," he had said, "unable to take care of his own family, has no right to quarrel with the hand that saves them from starvation. Only — don't tell me, Alice, which loaf of bread is bought with that money, for I think a crumb of it would choke me."

"I will never touch a penny of it, Fred, until it *is* a question of starvation," she had answered quietly. Then he had kissed her, and called her his good little wife, but no power on earth could have kept him in the house that day, though the March wind was keen to the dividing asunder of bone and marrow, and the rain heavy enough to drown a cuttle-fish.

So the consequence had been a sharp attack of rheumatism, from which he was only beginning to recover. And it was only human that, in the first glow of convalescence, he should feel aggrieved at having his social impulses curbed by a pecuniary bridle. For, indeed, never having in his life felt the sting of genuine *poortith cauld*, it was always difficult for Dr. Richards to remember that five dollars are only equal, after all, to five hundred cents; and that, while actually having nothing, a man cannot, in our present stage of development, virtually possess all things.

The Sunday dinner was a perfect success, Louis having spurred on Miss Sally to the concocting of a new, and, as she called it, "researchy," bill of fare.

"And if they *could* have had just the same at 'Prices' they'll never know it," Louis had said to the giver of the feast; "for they've never had just these dishes there yet, and in all probability never will, all at the same time; so you see it will be the same to them as if you had cooked it all yourself."

"And a good deal better to me," said Alice, laughing.

The guests were in fine spirits and appetite, and cleared their plates in royal style, Father McClosky averring that preaching was a mighty fine thing for the appetite, av it was bad intirely for the pocket-book.

"On that score, I've only a right to half-rations," said Ernest Clare, laughing; "for though I have offered my services to a certain overworked rector in our neighborhood, he only trusted me to read the lessons this morning."

"Sure he was afraid ye'd be after preaching Socialism if he let ye into his pulpit, from the text of the eleventh commandment, 'Thou shalt surely divide,'" said Father McClosky.

"I wouldn't have done it," returned the other; "there is only one rich man in the congregation, and it would have been decidedly personal. However, if I had preached from 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' I don't know that he could have taken offence."

"And you think they mean the same?" asked Dr. Richards.

"Don't you?" returned the man who never argued.

"In so far as neither one is practised or practicable, I suppose they do."

"You are entirely right, Dr. Richards. My text should have been 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength;' then the other would follow as a practical consequence."

"Humph! I suppose you mean that in a Pickwickian sense?"

"Did you ever know a man who loved God with heart, soul, and strength, and did *not* love his neighbor as himself?"

"I never knew — anything about it. Great heavens! can I read a man's heart, and say whom he loves?"

"Only your own," said Ernest Clare, half smiling, yet meeting the doctor's eyes with all the full, sweet, solemn power of his own.

The eyes fell, their owner hesitated how to reply. It was impossible to consider the clergyman a presuming meddler; he had pried into no man's individual consciousness; nay, had even quietly stated his conviction that the sacred penetralia could be entered only by the man himself.

Consciousness.

Did not the word itself — knowing *with* — imply another Presence within that Holy of holies?

Dr. Richards, as I have said before, was not a practised etymologist.

But had his emphatic denial of all power to read another man's heart been entirely sincere? Had not a sudden glory in a pair of liquid brown eyes beside him answered for one at least who loved both God and his neighbor? This thought, it is certain, came to the father's heart, and, because it came, he could not reply lightly or scoffingly to that sudden *argumentum ad hominem.*

Mr. Clare did not wait to be answered. When the doctor was again ready to listen, he found a brisk discussion going on of a certain book which had of late appeared, purporting to describe a Socialistic Utopia in the year of our Lord 2000.

"Oh! go away with your Socialism," Father McClosky was saying vehemently; "sorra a word but 'the Nation' is in the man's mouth from first to last; and a mighty fine word it is, too, with a history and a meaning in the old country, and without the bad associations of Socialism."

"Right, Father McClosky!" exclaimed the doctor. "When Socialists re-organize under the name of Nationalists, they will play a very strong card."

"I'm not a particularly brilliant statesman," said Mr. Clare, "and you may be quite right about the strong card; but, from my point of view, I confess I should be sorry to see it played. There is too much organization now, on that side of the fence."

Dr. Richards took time for thought before he replied to this. He had come to feel a little shy of contradicting the man who never argued.

"As political parties now stand in this country," he said slowly, "another one would but add so much more to the corruption and bribery at present existing. Is that what you mean?"

"Precisely. As matters now stand, the ideas which I am quite willing to call National are gaining new adherents every day, irrespective of party. And when a plant has once taken root, it isn't well to be digging it up every day or two, to see how the process is going on."

"You are as sanguine as Bellamy himself, Mr. Clare," said Alice. "I wonder if he really believes in his Boston of the future?"

"He takes care to slur over the embryonic stages," observed the doctor, laughing, "and present to us his Phœnix, the Nation, fully grown."

"You must remember we are passing through the embryonic stage now," said Mr. Clare, "though, I confess, I should have liked a few particulars of our chipping the shell, and just how we looked when we first came out."

"Ah! there you put your finger on the weak point. He insists that the shell was *chipped*, not cut by the sword; and I don't see the slightest possibility of that."

"One never does till the hour strikes."

"The hour!" said Father McClosky, "sure, it's the hour and the Man, too, that we want. Where's the Man?"

"Perhaps not yet born," said Ernest Clare, smiling; "perhaps a baby in his mother's arms; perhaps a schoolboy, studying the Monroe Doctrine and parsing the Declaration of Independence; perhaps working at some trade or profession: guiding the plough, like Cincinnatus; surveying his native land, like Washington; or practising law, like Abraham Lincoln."

"You are very sanguine," said Dr. Richards, between a smile and a sigh; "I wish I were half so much so. But, whatever I might wish, I don't venture to hope for the establishment of a Commune, at least in my time or without violence. It doesn't seem to me at all a practicable idea."

"The abolition of slavery was not practicable, Dr. Richards; it was simply *done*."

"And done by the sword, Mr. Clare. Although you never argue, you will be able to remember, perhaps," said the doctor, smiling, "that I don't dispute the possibility of establishing, by violence, a Commune that should be as short-lived as those Parisian affairs."

"Our own Republic was founded by the sword," said Alice.

"But with a difference, and in different times," returned the clergyman. "One must always take one's century into account, you know; though in any age it is lawful and right to kick a man out who has broken into one's house. But, as to slavery, do you call the negro question a settled one?"

"Well, they are legally their own masters, but whether they are better off in essentials is an open question."

"Some day, Dr. Richards, take up some thoughtful history which you already know pretty thoroughly, and read it with this question in your mind, 'Is any question ever so decided by the sword as to leave everybody better off all round?' Isn't there always a residuum of evil to somebody — and usually to everybody — caused by the very means used to effect a cure?"

"Just as the homœopaths say of allopathic remedies," interposed Alice roguishly; "one must recover from the disease first, and the medicine afterwards."

"Passing over that slur on my profession, which I scorn to notice," said the doctor, with a disdainful glance at his wife, "I agree with you entirely, Mr. Clare; but might not one say the same of everything else in the world, besides war and allopathy? Is not the true reading of the curse laid on Adam, 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, and it shall not agree with thee after thou eatest it'?"

"Well, no," replied Ernest Clare, laughing; "bread always agrees with a healthy stomach, I think, when it is pure. The trouble in the slavery business was that the bread was not pure, in fact, was scarcely to be called bread at all, and the stomachs were not healthy."

"Southern fire-eaters!" observed the doctor with a smile.

"And Northern interference," said the other. "Of course, the question was not a simple one between slavery and freedom, but was complicated by demagogy and sectional prejudice, as well as the old story of Cavalier and Puritan. But, leaving these points out of sight for the moment, it seems to me that the fault of the war lay chiefly with the side which on other grounds I sympathize with most cordially, the abolition party."

"Do you think it well to discuss those old questions?" asked Alice. "The war is over and done with, and in my opinion ought to be forgotten."

"If it were *done with*," said Mr. Clare. "But ought the past ever to be forgotten? For my part, I can never look upon it as a 'dead past,' but as a wise, living teacher, whose lessons are very necessary and full of significance. But, of course, no subject can be discussed at your table that is disagreeable to you," he added courteously.

"Oh! I was merely speaking generally," she said, smiling; "don't let me interrupt you. Dr. Richards's pessimism is contagious, perhaps; but if the war can really teach us any valuable lessons, it would be a pity not at least to know what they are."

Ernest Clare looked at her very gravely, very kindly before he replied. There was to him something infinitely touching in the atmosphere of this home, its intellect, its refinement, purity, and brave self-devotion, and its utter hopelessness. After a moment he said gently, —

"We should be poor indeed without the past, Mrs. Richards; our own individual past, I mean. Don't you remember Dickens's 'Haunted Man'?" Then, with a sudden change of tone, —

"I think I learned my horror of organization from the abolitionists, though I am not sure that that was their mistake. If every man's motives had been pure, and every man's heart full of love to white and black brother alike, they might have organized and welcome; but it is hard to have a party without party spirit, and with every member added the difficulty as to loving the sinner and hating the sin increases in a geometrical ratio."

"That's because it's so much aisier to love the sin and hate the sinner," put in Father McClosky, whose orator's appetite was, by this time, partially satisfied.

"I should not object to a party," said Dr. Richards thoughtfully, "nor to party spirit, provided it kept within bounds. But I think we ought to have followed England's example, and indemnified our slave-holders."

"Even though they could not show a clear title to human souls?" asked Mr. Clare suggestively.

"Souls! I really can't say, as I have never dissected one, what a soul is. But, as to title, I might not be able to show a clear title to this house; yet I inherited it from my father, and he built it, or, rather, had it built by another man. Now, suppose the other man stole the materials or the money to buy them; the house would, no doubt, by moral right belong to him from whom the money was stolen. Would the government be, therefore, justified in forcibly ejecting me, for his benefit, I and mine being entirely innocent in the matter?"

"The point is, it seems to me," said Mr. Clare, "whether we aim to get rid of evil in itself, or only of a wrong to some individual or class. In this case, the wrong to the slave was abolished at the expense of another wrong to the slave-holder, a wrong forbidden by the law which bids us to overcome evil with good, the only method by which it can be overcome. The old abolition party tried to overcome it with evil, by stirring up strife and preaching insurrection; then the Southern pride and obstinacy determined to fight for their peculiar institution, and the result is that the large majority of our negroes are worse off, morally and physically, than they were as slaves; and the negro question is a more puzzling problem to-day than it was in '61."

"But would not their condition have been the same had they been set free by purchase?" asked Alice.

"No; for the most thoughtful minds on both sides favored their gradual enfranchisement and colonization in Liberia, which would have been the making of them as a nation. But I see no hope of anything like that now, unless we get the Commune *without violence:* in which case, among so many sweeping changes, one more or less will not signify materially," said Mr. Clare.

"We seem to return to our muttons, whether we would or no," observed the doctor. "Here is Monsieur Tonson come again. But I think I see what you mean by your lessons of the past; only, how the wrongs of the poor man are to be redressed without violence or wrong to the rich, is too hard a nut for me to crack."

"Gradual enfranchisement," said Mr. Clare, "and brotherly love on both sides."

Dr. Richards shrugged his shoulders. "It is a question of 'next things,'" said the clergyman. "Some day I will read you a little poem, if you like, about that. The idea is, that we can see only one step at a time, can live but one moment at a time; and that, if each of these is clearly right, the end must be the same. Of course, the application is only to individual life, but I think it is also true of nations; we can see but one step at a time. It has been objected to Socialism that no practicable plan for securing it has ever been suggested. To my mind, that is its most hopeful feature."

"My dear sir, do you wish to stun us with your paradoxes?"

"The kingdom of God cometh as a thief in the night," said Mr. Clare earnestly. "I think though — in fact, I am sure — that we can see the *next step* clearly enough," he added.

"And that is?" —

"A more equitable division of profits between employer and employed, which, by the definition, would certainly wrong nobody, and could not be carried out by violence," he added, smiling. "Public opinion is steadily growing in that direction, and by and by it will become a matter for legislation; for one good result of our election-machine is that if the great mass of the people want any definite thing they will infallibly get it."

"And the result will be that most of the employers and stockholders will find out that the change has been to their interest as well as that of their employés," said the doctor. "Go on, Mr. Clare; you would convert me to optimism if — I had a *leetle* more confidence in human nature."

"Sure, human nature is capable of infinite pawsibilitees," said Father McClosky; "though, when it comes to probabilitees," he added thoughtfully, "a man must look out for storms."

"I don't overlook the danger of storms," said Mr. Clare; "on the contrary, I have pointed it out."

"Well, well, meteorology notwithstanding," interposed Dr. Richards, "when you had secured your division of profits, Mr. Clare, and thus, we will say, obviated all future strikes and commercial crises, as, I presume, would be the result" —

"I suppose it would, Dr. Richards."

"Well, what would you do next?"

If he hoped to catch Ernest Clare tripping, he missed his mark.

"I'll tell you, when it *is* next," the other replied, smiling. "Perhaps, some restriction upon the amount of property which a man may leave by will to any one heir" —

"Would that be equitable?" asked Alice.

"If the law claims — as it does — the right to regulate testamentary dispositions at all, I don't see why one should draw the line just here," replied Mr. Clare. "However, I don't lay much stress on such a regulation as that; there would be so many ways of evading it, unless it were so worded as to be tyrannous. The next step that I fancy I see sometimes, when the clouds lift a little, is a modified and modern version of the old Jewish land-laws; the main principle of which was that the land belonged, not to individuals, but to the nation or tribe."

"Eh? I might be better up than I am in Hebrew antiquities, but I thought that at the Jubilee the land, if it had been sold, reverted to the heirs of the original possessor," said the doctor.

"The fact that he was unable to alienate the land shows that he possessed merely a life-interest. And you know that not one inch of ground was allowed to pass from one tribe to another."

"I see," said Dr. Richards; "well! but if the step from the present *régime* to your modified Hebraism equals one hundred, from modified Hebraism to Socialism equals only about one. I see only a solitary obstacle; but that will make one equal to the m'th power of one hundred."

"An impossible equation," said Mr. Clare, smiling. "What is the obstacle?"

"This. Given your equitable division and your Jewish land-laws — why, the people would be too well contented to take any more steps until that state of society had become as rotten as the present."

"Revolutions never go backward," returned the other, "and, rotten as our present state of society may be, we are farther on than any nation of the world, and our real progress so far has been steadily in the right direction."

"Humph! as you never argue, I suppose you can't prove that."

"Oh, no! but I can give you a few instances," said the clergyman, laughing. "Take the idea of duty or allegiance to a man — or woman — who claims it simply as his birthright, because his ancestors oppressed ours, whom they allowed only such rights as were actually extorted from them. Unless your mother was an Englishwoman, as mine was, Dr. Richards, you can hardly realize how utterly obsolete such an idea has become in America. I don't deny that we feel a sneaking kindness for the royal family of Great Britain; but anything like duty or loyalty" —

"Why should we be loyal to Queen Victoria or Kaiser Wilhelm, either?" asked Louis, speaking for the first time. "She's a good woman, and he's a great soldier; but that has nothing to do with *us*."

"That is exactly what I mean," said Ernest Clare. "The idea of superiority of birth is rapidly decaying, Dr. Richards; we have almost come to believe that all men are created free and equal; after a bit, we shall come to the 'inalienable rights.' I am not at all afraid but that the Declaration will take care of itself. As for your impossible equation, you must bear in mind the conditions of the problem. If 'gradual enfranchisement' equal x, and brotherly love on both sides equal y, then, indeed, $1 + y = x + 100^{m}$ might be possible and welcome! I won't stickle for the form of a commune, so long as I have the spirit."

"Ah—h!" cried Father McClosky, "ye've got to firm ground at last, ye bog-trotter! the very ground where the Church has been intrenched for eighteen hundred years!"

"And high time," said Ernest Clare with quiet intensity, "that she should take up the ark of the Lord, and bear it across Jordan into the Promised Land."

"I don't quite understand you," said the doctor curiously. He was intensely interested in the theories and beliefs of his new friend, which, as the reader may have observed, he only opposed to draw out more fully.

"Why, you know, of course, that communism is the theory of the Church," said Mr. Clare. "Marion Crawford brings that out very well in his 'Saracinesca;' but Crawford — I hope I don't do him injustice — seems to me a dilettante in religion and politics, who doesn't believe anything deeply enough to fight for it."

"Aha!" cried Father McClosky, "there's the blood of ould Ireland at last!"

"Fighting with one's pen is quite in accordance with the spirit of the age," replied Mr. Clare calmly.

"But not argument, hey?"

"Not unless you are sure of convincing your man," was the reply. "Well, Dr. Richards, to take up our subject where it was broken off by this discourteous Irishman, I have sometimes fancied that one of the differences of opinion between St. Paul and the Church of Jerusalem may have been that they wished to insist on the Gentile converts holding all their possessions in common, as did those at Jerusalem, while St. Paul, as a man of the world, saw that this was inexpedient, if not impossible, at that time."

"A bit of original exegesis that is truly edifying," observed Father McClosky.

"I don't preach it as truth, only suggest it as an hypothesis," said Mr. Clare good-humoredly; "but, there is some authority for it, 'tis of a piece with his treatment of the slave question, and — not impossible, which, I suppose, is the most one can say for it. He was not one to throw an unnecessary stumbling-block in a weak brother's path; and, besides, it is only the *spirit* of Communism that is essential to Christianity."

"Do you ever contradict yourself just a little bit?" asked the doctor.

"As an Irishman, no doubt I do," was the reply, "but in this case the contradiction is only in seeming. For I believe — though perhaps wrongly — that the time is at hand when we may have both the form and the spirit. Nay, I think — I am sure — that if the human race is to advance much farther than it has done, money must be abolished, the temple of Mammon overthrown, and the Almighty Dollar perish in the ruins. That is the crusade in which I would engage every man, woman, and child who bears the name of Christian, officered by those who call themselves God's ambassadors."

"I don't know," said Alice doubtfully; "one can do so much good with money."

"One must do harm with it," was the reply. "Besides, there ought not to be the need of doing good — of that sort; and under the Commune, where alone it would be possible to dispense with money, there would be no good to be done except with love."

"Mr. Clare," said Alice, "what would you do if you were a rich man?"

"I thank God I am not," he replied; "but if I had inherited wealth that was honestly come by in the first instance, I hope I should do my duty in that state of life unto which it had pleased God to call me."

"And if the money were coined from the blood and tears of your fellow-beings," asked the doctor, "would you take it, or starve?"

"Starve!" said Ernest Clare. "Ah! Mrs. Richards shakes her head, she thinks me a terrible fanatic; but only because she doesn't understand that every age has its own battles to fight, and this against Mammon is ours. I see a very pretty little bronze statuette of the flying Mercury on the bracket yonder, Mrs. Richards, and there is a head of the Capitoline Jove on my own mantel-piece, which I value exceedingly. Yet what would a Christian of the first century have thought of possessing such images? they who would not sit at meat in an idol's temple, and died in agony rather than offer one grain of incense before an idol's altar! That, you see, was *their* battle. Mammon is *our* enemy. Truly 'an idol is nothing in this world; and there is none other God but one'; *yet*, 'if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.'"

He was silent for a moment; for the look exchanged between husband and wife told him that he had spoken more wisely than he knew. Then Dr. Richards said lightly, —

"Well, if ever I turn Christian, Mr. Clare, you shall have the glory of my conversion."

CHAPTER VIII.

RITTER FRITZ.

One afternoon late in the summer, Mr. Clare and Dr. Richards, accompanied by a large party of boys and young men, including Freddy and the Ark of the Covenant, had climbed a rather steep road which led to one of their favorite resorts, a quaint and beautiful cemetery on a hill overlooking the river. The names, the German inscriptions, the artificial flowers, the child's toys upon the smaller graves, the beautiful river flowing beneath — "It is all a mistake," said Dr. Richards, smiling; "this is not practical, humdrum America; we are in Germany, the home of myth and song, and yonder flows the mysterious and beautiful Rhine. I am positive there is a ruined castle just at the turn of the hill yonder; and, if you listen, you will hear the song of the Lorelei."

"I hope not," replied Mr. Clare, so seriously that the others looked at him in surprise, perceiving which he went on more lightly, "There's a song of the kind to be heard even in humdrum America, boys; and I confess to a terrible fear lest some of us should some day listen to it. A song that promises wealth and happiness to everybody at the cost of only a little bloodshed and violence. 'All these things will I give thee,' says Satan to us, as once to our Master, 'if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' And don't you suppose it was a real temptation? to blot out the 'two thousand years of wrong' through which the world has waited, and to establish then and there the kingdom for which we still look?"

"That's a new explanation of that temptation," observed Dr. Richards, who never let fall a syllable that could lessen or hinder Mr. Clare's influence over his "boys."

"No, it's in all the Commentaries," said the clergyman, smiling; "except that we are now hoping that this kingdom may manifest itself to the world after a certain new yet old fashion. And that hope is the more sure," he added, "because the temptation has grown so loud and insistent. 'Fall down and worship me; manufacture a little dynamite; plot and conspire a little; murder a few tyrants; it's all for the good of the race, the salvation of the oppressed, and the rescue of the poor and suffering!' Do I blink the strength of the temptation, or blame unduly those who fall before it? The blessed Lord Himself can feel for them, and has given them the only effective weapon against it: 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.'"

"It's pretty hard, sometimes, not to hate a rich man," said Fritz Rolf gloomily. He laid down beside him on the grass an opera-glass which he had borrowed from Herr Martin, the jeweller, in order to examine some distant object in the landscape; but it had evidently been directed, as he held it to his eyes, towards the town they had left, where, perhaps, the color of a dress had caught his eye. It was on a secluded by-street, shut in by the high side walls of factories, empty and deserted on this summer Sunday evening, that the wearer of the dress stood, with her fair head drooping against the breast of a black coat, the sleeve of which gloomed about the blue waist.

Fritz was very pale, but he said nothing; as he himself would have expressed it, he "wouldn't give it away to those fellows;" so he kept the glass strictly in his own possession, in spite of the objurgations levelled against him. He had borrowed it, he said, he was responsible for it, and he did not mean to have it broken. Only Mr. Clare, whose eyesight was as keen as the rest of his faculties, had caught a gleam of blue down the same treacherous vista of tall chimneys and low fences; and, though it was too far away for recognition of the wearer, fancied that he traced in the young man's unusual sulky selfishness the features of chivalrous knighthood; upon which hint he spake.

"It must have been especially hard," he said, "for those old fellows who used 'to ride abroad redressing human wrong,' putting down violence with the strong hand."

"Like King Arthur's Round Table," said Freddy eagerly.

"Just so; next time, boys, we'll bring Tennyson along, and Freddy shall read to us, if he will, about the knights. He reads wonderfully well; as well as he paints. But now I'll tell you some of the story of it."

Fritz scarcely listened to the story, he was so busy considering what was best to be done. Long before he could reach the street where he had seen them, the blue dress and the black coat would have vanished; besides, he had no legal or moral right to interfere, or even to suppose that what he had seen was anything more than honest "keeping company." Indeed, from any contrary supposition Fritz's honest soul revolted with all the strength of its own integrity; yet the secrecy observed, — for no one at "Prices" suspected that even an acquaintance existed between the two he had seen, — and the man's reputation, which was none of the best, left no reason to suppose that he, at least, intended honorable marriage. "And it is so easy to deceive a girl," thought Fritz, grinding his teeth with secret rage. Just at this moment, something Mr. Clare was saying caught his attention.

"No enemy, boys, is bad enough to justify us in hating him. It may be perfectly right to knock him down or give him a good thrashing, but only in case it is the best course for *him*, as well as for those we want to help. For there is many a brute who is not amenable to any milder argument than a horsewhip; and it is, of course, better for him to try conclusions with that than to be allowed to commit a crime and injure the innocent. Your muscles were given you to protect not only your mothers, sisters, and sweethearts, but also every weak one unable to protect himself; but I should be chary of handing over the oppressor to the secular arm, until all other methods had failed; nor even then to gratify any personal feeling. If you are ready to bind his head up afterwards, you may trust yourself to knock it against a stone wall," he ended, smiling, "but not unless."

"I'd like to see the color of his brains first," said Fritz savagely; "and decide upon mending him afterwards."

"Then you're not a good soldier, my boy," said Mr. Clare. "While you profess to beat the enemy off the open battle-field, you will in reality give him shelter in the fortress intrusted to your special care, your own heart."

"The enemy! you mean sin?" said Fritz, who was well accustomed to Mr. Clare's modes of speech.

"The only enemy worth speaking of."

"But suppose a man is trying to lead some one into sin — a girl, say; and you could prevent it by breaking his head?"

"Would that root out the sin from her heart, Fritz? A girl who will listen to one man might listen to another, and you could not keep on breaking heads forever."

"She might be deceived once; she could not be the second time."

"In that case, there need be no question of breaking heads; you need simply open her eyes."

"And if she refused to believe me?"

"Those who are true know the truth when it comes to them. If a woman deliberately shuts her eyes to a danger of that sort, it argues some untrueness in herself, which he who would save her can only conquer by the completeness of his own truth and purity. He may die for her; he *must* die to self; but he must not *dare* to sin for her, lest he lose both her and himself."

Fritz had been lying upon the grass with his handsome head very close to Mr. Clare's knee, as the latter sat on a circular bench around the stem of a tall chestnut tree; and this conversation had therefore been inaudible to all but themselves. At this point, the young man turned slightly, so as to look the clergyman full in the face. His own, usually so bright and carelessly gay, was pale and drawn with care and anxiety, and his dark eyes asked so plainly, "How much do you know?" that the clergyman answered the question.

"My dear boy," he said kindly, "I don't know at all what is troubling you, only that you are troubled. If I can help you, I will, without asking any questions. Mind that, my boy; but the dear Lord, Fritz, *does* know, and can help you better than I can."

"If a fellow could only believe that," said Fritz slowly. "I think I'd like to go an errand for you, Mr. Clare. Isn't there something you'd like at 'Prices'? I want to get away from the boys" —

"No explanations," said Mr. Clare, smiling. "I'll trust you and abet you without. Here is the key of my rooms; you might see if the soot has fallen down the chimney, or the sun faded the carpet."

"All right," said Fritz, slowly raising himself to an erect position. He put the key in his pocket, and strolled off, leaving Mr. Clare to satisfy the uproarious curiosity of his companions.

Soot and carpet were in their proper relative positions as he opened the door of the clergyman's sitting-room, and the sun could not possibly have forced an entrance through the heavy green shutters that guarded the window. The room felt close and warm after the cool evening air on the hill, and Fritz threw the shutters wide, and, leaning his arms on the window-sill, looked down into the street.

"If a fellow could only believe in Jesus Christ!" he murmured. "He's about the only one I know who could help me; for the pastor never could manage Gretchen; besides, he'd be so wild at the bare idea that he'd be ready to tear me in pieces. Then, any interference from anybody would put her on her ear directly; yet, as the parson says, breaking that rascal's head wouldn't do anybody good — but me! Now, Jesus Christ — if there is such a person — could help, if He'd a mind to; and if help of any kind *does* come, it 'll be from Him, that's a dead certainty. I suppose the parson would ask Him; but, no, hang it all! if He is the sort of person they say He is, and knows all about it, He won't wait to be asked; Mr. Clare didn't. Well, there's just this about it. If Gretchen comes safe out of this, even if she marries some other fellow, so he's an honest man and not a cursed rascal like Frank Randolph, then I will believe in Him, and fight His battles, too, for all I'm worth."

It was an odd self-dedication, and one could almost fancy a smile of amused tenderness on the Face that was all the while so very, very close to him. The next moment Gretchen herself came hurriedly around the corner. She was flushed and heated as if from rapid walking; her bonnet was slightly askew, and her "bangs" were wild: the whole appearance of things was as if something had happened, or was about to happen, to her, at last.

"Aha! my lady," said Fritz to himself, "my eye is upon you, and I propose to keep it there. It's come to stay. Hello!" he called aloud. "Hello, Gretchen!"

She glanced up and around with an air of frightened guilt until she caught his eye.

"What are you doing there?" she called.

"Waiting for the parson. Where have you been, to get so warm?"

"None of your business," she cried, as she disappeared around the corner.

Fritz drew in his head with a smile.

"I don't mind trifles like that," he said grimly. "Guess she'll sing another tune by and by; and meanwhile I'll go get some supper." He paused before a copy of Gabriel Max's head of Christ, and looked at it steadfastly, just checking himself in saying, "I am much obliged to you."

"'Stuff and nonsense!' He ain't a picture, anyway," said Fritz, as he banged the door with unnecessary emphasis.

In spite of his eye being upon her, Gretchen managed to elude him, and go home by herself when her duties were over; and when he followed her to the parsonage, he was told that she had gone to bed with a bad headache. There was a light in her window, however, and a shadow upon the blind as of some one moving about the room. Fritz felt half inclined to keep watch all night; but, though in one sense a full-blooded German, three generations of his kith and kin had breathed American air; so he only said, "Humbug!" and went to bed in a re-actionary frame of mind.

And all the while that Face was so very, very close to him!

He could not sleep; the room was small and close on that warm night; his pillow was first too high, then too low; and all sorts of horrors haunted his restless brain. George, on the pillow beside him, snored loud and heavily, only rousing occasionally to protest against his brother's restlessness, and bid him — with a mild but terribly sounding German oath — to lie still and go to sleep. But it was not until near morning that Fritz, having by sheer force of will remained motionless unusually long, had a strange dream. He thought the Christ Himself stood beside him, like as Gabriel Max has drawn Him, only without that look of solemn agony. Gently as a father, tenderly as a mother, He laid His hand on the young man's burning brow, saying, "Sleep, Fritz, I am watching over her." What he dreamed next, Fritz could not remember; but suddenly it was broad daylight in the room, and he was sitting up in bed, inspired — not oppressed — by the sense that *something* was to be done immediately.

He dressed himself quickly without waking George, and only discovered, when he was outside in the silent street, that he had mechanically put on his Sunday clothes.

"But it's all right," said Fritz, "if He's got anything really for me to do, I'm ready; and if not, I'll get home in time to change 'em. Well! I'm hanged if I even know where I'm going, for all I walk so thundering fast. Eh? oh! good-morning to you, Denny," as the railway porter we once saw conversing with Father McClosky, crossed over the street to meet him.

"What's up at 'Prices,' Fritz," demanded the porter, "that they do be sendin' Miss Gretchen to New York be the foive-o'clock train?"

Fritz's heart stood still for a minute, then he said coolly, "That's more than I can tell you, Denny. Did you see her off?"

"Sure, I did, an' mighty glad to oblige her. She axed me to buy her ticket, but that blazin' young spalpeen that's managin' Randolph's Mill come along, and took it out of my hands intirely, bad luck to him!"

"Oh! Frank Randolph has gone too, has he? Then she won't travel alone, at any rate."

"Indade, and she won't that, for they got into the same car, and it's mighty attintive he was, wrappin' her up, and carryin' her carpet-bag," said Denny, looking curiously at the young man.

If Fritz had been a genuine American, he would have laughed, even under the given circumstances, at the idea of the elegant Frank Randolph saddled with the pastor's antiquated carpet-bag, with its faded, once gaudy colors, and oilcloth-covered handles; but, as it was, he only said, still coolly, —

"Well, don't give it away, Denny; it's private business she's gone on. I did not know young Randolph was going on this train, though. I say, if I take the six-o'clock, I won't be much behind her, will I?"

"Gets in three hours later," said Denny, "connects with the western express at the junction; but I guess it's the best ye'll do now. Phy didn't ye make the five-o'clock?"

"Overslept myself," said Fritz. "I say, will you take a note from me to 'Prices'?"

To which Denis consenting, he wrote on a blank leaf of the huge pocketbook in which he always carried the "pass" Mr. Randolph had procured for him, —

"DEAR MR. CLARE, — I'm off for New York. Gretchen has gone on the 5 A.M. You promised to help me, so make it all right with the Emperor and Miss Sally, and don't let the pastor make a row. I'll bring her back all right in a day or two. Blame it all on me.

"Truly yrs,

"FRITZ R."

"P. S. I don't want her talked about: my wife, you know."

CHAPTER IX.

"THE ETYMOLOGY OF GRACE."

"It is rather a confused note," said Mr. Clare, "and I fear I can't show it to any one, as it was intended for my eye alone; but I gather from it that Fritz expects to be married in New York, and to return in a day or two."

"The letter she left on her bureau," said the pastor, whose eyes were red with weeping, "said much the same, except that she spoke not of so soon returning. I doubted it not to be Fritz with whom she had fled, though she spoke of riches and jewels, and of taking care of her old father. But ach! that a child of mine should so act!"

"Well, young folks will be young folks," observed the Emperor, who sat looking intensely amused, on the side of the table; "and I suppose they just got tired of waiting."

"It was that there pass to New York that was burning a hole in Fritz's pocketbook," said Miss Sally sagely, "that's what it was. Well, it's a foolish business altogether, and I thought better of both of them, but I guess we'll have to make the best of it."

"Laugh it off," advised Father McClosky. "Av coorse, 'twas foolish, as ye say, Miss Sally; but maybe after all 'twas motives of economy injeuced 'em. Sure, New York's a mighty aisy place to get married in, annyway; no fuss about a license or that. The wurrust of it is, a felly never knows whin he *ain't* married. I never was there but wance, and thin I shook in me shoes till I was safe out again; but whin a man *wants* to be married" — he paused expressively.

The plan thus outlined being adopted, it came to pass that when Mr. and Mrs. Fritz Rolf returned to Micklegard, as they did in the course of a week, they were greeted with a roar of good-natured ridicule, but found their escapade considered otherwise a matter of slight importance.

But every one wondered at the change that had come over the erstwhile calm and self-reliant Gretchen. She was prettier than ever, with that new softness in her eyes, that shrinking timidity in her manner; and it was beautiful to see how she clung to her young husband, watching every look and gesture as though her life hung upon the issue, while his manner to her was tenderly authoritative; and he seemed altogether older and more sedate, — sobered, as every one said, by his new responsibilities.

Both retained their former positions at "Prices," though, "for the sake of the example," as they were sternly assured, they ought, in strict justice, to have been discharged. It was an evening or two after their return that the young bridegroom sought opportunity for a confidential talk with Mr. Clare.

"You've stood by me, sir," he said, "like a man and a brother; and I want to tell you all about it."

"Whatever you like, Fritz. You know I'm not inquisitive."

"That you ain't, Mr. Clare; but you know so much already, I'm afraid you might blame her more than she deserves. Did you suspicion anything that day on the hill?"

"Why, I saw you were troubled; and I knew that your wife — as she is now — had — well, since you ask — had given occasion for complaints of non-attention to business, and had been seen in company you would have disapproved."

"Is that so? I didn't know it. Who saw her?"

"Louis Metzerott; but he thinks they met only once, by accident."

Fritz swore a huge oath under his breath, then begged Mr. Clare's pardon. "And after all," he said, "it was a pretty neat job; for I suppose no one else suspects anything."

"Why, your friend, the porter, upon hearing of your marriage, carried his perplexities to Father McClosky," said Mr. Clare, laughing, "as to how a young man should have overslept himself on the morning of his projected elopement. I don't know how he was convinced it was all right and perfectly natural, for there aren't many matrimonial precedents in the Acta Sanctorum or Alban Butler. But Father McClosky is equal to most things."

"Then, I suppose he mentioned that she and Frank Randolph left together? It would be better for you to tell the Father, then, Mr. Clare, that when she got to that d—— confounded city, and found he did not mean to marry her, she just slapped his face and left him," said Fritz proudly. "In a fair, stand-up fight, Gretchen could lick that puppy any day. She's got twice his muscle; but she had a pretty bad fright, poor girl, wandering about the streets of New York; and so had I for her. I traced 'em at the depot, by the pastor's old carpet-bag; but, when I got to the hotel, where they had a suite of rooms, and found both of 'em gone, I was just ready to give up. However, I started off again, wild enough, you bet; and, just at the corner, who should run into my arms but Gretchen herself! So, as Frank Randolph had registered under a false name at that hotel, and paid a week in advance, we went back there, till I got her a little cheered up; then, we found a clergyman, got married, and stayed the week out at the hotel" —

"You did?" with much surprise.

"You bet your sweet life we did! Why not? Randolph had had enough of it; he wasn't going to show *his* face there again in a hurry, and, if he had, I was ready for him. Yes, sir; we lived like princes, and it didn't cost us a red cent!"

Mr. Clare repressed a smile. "It was a great danger, and a wonderful escape," he said gravely. "Hundreds of poor girls are less fortunate, Fritz, than your Gretchen."

"That's what I tell her," said the young man coolly. "Oh! I think she's all right now; she's found her master, and knows it. And I'll never forget the way you've stood by me in this, Mr. Clare; you and Jesus Christ," he added, not irreverently. "I'm solid on the religious question from now on, and don't you forget it."

Mr. Clare knew his business too well to 'thuse over his new convert. "I am glad to hear it, my boy," he said, with a manner that did not belie his words, yet quietly. "You will find the dear Lord a true friend always; but not, perhaps, always as visibly as in the present instance. Sometimes He requires us to say with Job, 'Though He slay me, *yet* will I trust in Him.' When you have children of your own, Fritz, you will understand fatherly correction."

"I see," said Fritz, smiling, and coloring at the allusion. "Well, I won't go back on Him, whatever happens; and that's all there is about it."

As he went his way to the parsonage, where he and his bride were lodged for the present, there was a quiet smile upon the young bridegroom's lips. "She's found her master," he said within himself; "but that ain't the best of it. She's found her heart, too, Gretchen has. She never loved that puppy; she hadn't a heart then to love him or anybody but herself; but she loves me. She has her faults yet, I know; though any girl will tell lies about a sweetheart and keeping company; but I love her, and she loves me, and what more a fellow ought to want *I* don't know."

And indeed he had the air of being perfectly contented.

Meanwhile Frank Randolph was too well aware of the sorry figure he had cut in the matter, to be otherwise than silent.

And Henry Randolph came home, having deposited his young charges at their convent, and also kept an eye on Dare, with evident success, as the latter returned with him to America; and both were in such jubilant spirits that it seemed as though all things had gone with them exceeding well.

Louis Metzerott felt, quite illogically, that the return of her father had broken the last bond that connected him with Pinkie. He was too young for all the hope and courage to die forever out of his life, but also too young to believe in their resurrection; and, just for the present, life was very bitter to him; and only his inherited share of his father's dogged resolution brought him safely through the summer and winter to a somewhat eventful spring, whereunto we are hurrying as fast as our pen will take us, with due attention to necessary business matters.

Upon one of these, the disposal of the sum which Mr. Randolph had transferred to her credit, Alice obtained her husband's permission to consult Mr. Clare.

"So long as your husband's counsel is not enough for you," said the doctor, with some bitterness. "But all women are influenced by a straight-cut black coat, even though they may know it covers a fool."

"Mr. Clare is not a fool, Fred."

"He's an enigma, to be as clear-headed as he is, and yet no hypocrite. Go on, ask him whatever you like; I sha'n't mind having his views on the subject, that is, if you care to tell me, for they are sure to be original at all events, and you need not bind yourself to carry them out."

"I shall consult him in your presence and nowhere else," said Alice, more wounded than she cared to show.

Mr. Clare listened to her statement of the facts in the case, with a calm exterior but some inward perplexity.

"I suppose *something* must be done with the money," he said, after a little consideration; "but your husband is probably better able to advise you what, than I am."

Dr. Richards smiled grimly. "It might be given back to Randolph, or transferred to Pinkie," he said grimly; "or even Frank would not turn up his nose at it."

"The last I should by no means advise," said the clergyman quickly; "indeed, I am not sure that I can advise at all," he added.

"Well, it is usually a thankless task, I admit," said the doctor; "but when you find us at a total deadlock in a question of conscience, eh?"

"I can *not* see the harm there would be in taking this money and making a proper use of it," said Alice emphatically.

Mr. Clare smiled. "I begin to understand," he said. "Two people are never at a total deadlock, Dr. Richards, upon any question that requires immediate action, and which both of them thoroughly understand. Truth being what it is, the thing is impossible."

"I book for a future discussion, 'What *is* Truth?' meanwhile, the previous question is of more immediate interest."

"Now, it seems to me," returned the clergyman, "that the cause of the present deadlock is that both parties miss altogether the full import of that previous question. *Can* you make a proper use, Mrs. Richards, of anything not lawfully yours? Wait a minute, doctor," with a glance of mirthful menace, as that personage drew a long breath of satisfaction, "I want to ask *you* whether you can rightfully make over to another who has no better claim to it than yourself, money which he will certainly make a bad use of, begging your forgiveness, Mrs. Richards, but I know whereof I speak."

"I dare say," she replied sadly.

"Again we wander," said the doctor. "The question is not of Frank's peccadilloes, but of his father's money."

"Is it his father's?"

"Morally? no, by all the gods!"

"And not legally, for it stands in your wife's name."

"To whom, then, does it morally belong?" asked Alice.

"Ask your husband!" said Mr. Clare.

"Why, I suppose Mr. Bellamy would say to the nation," returned the doctor, "but I certainly don't propose to hand it over to Congress. Besides, I don't care a hang for the nation, as such. I'm an individualist; and every coin of that accursed hoard is stained with the blood of individuals."

"Again you miss the point, my dear sir. If the money be not yours, you have no concern with it further than to hand it over to its lawful owners."

"Who are either dead or wish they were, and could not possibly be traced in either case."

"That certainly complicates matters," said Mr. Clare, laughing; "but, as some of them were negroes, as I understand it, you might donate a part at least to the Commission" —

"I'll be hanged if I do! Besides, they never owned a penny in their lives, poor devils! The money was made at their expense, but was not theirs."

"Dr. Richards, I fear you're a humbug. Don't you see that you have the feeling of property in this money?

You speak of it as not yours, yet you'll give it to this one, and be hanged if you give it to that" —

"I know!" cried Alice suddenly, her perceptions quickened, perhaps, by the feeling that her husband was coming off second best from the encounter of wits; "I know. They are going to sell more stock at 'Prices' next month; we could invest this money in Freddy's name, and the income from it would give him a support if anything happened to us, Fred."

Mr. Clare waited for Dr. Richards to express his approval. "Well, I don't know that you could do better," he said somewhat reluctantly. "It would be as near to returning the principal to its lawful owners as we are at all likely to come, and Freddy's due proportion of the national wealth would amount to considerably more than the interest at five per cent, I suppose."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Mr. Clare, who seemed pleased to pass to a less personal subject. "They want to start a job-printing office at 'Prices.' There are a couple of printers among the small shareholders who would rather be employed by the community than to work as Hal o' the Wynd fought, for their own hand; and they think by joining forces they could get together a pretty good trade. I could get them some little ecclesiastical printing, you know; and they are looking for some one who can design crosses, crowns, Greek letters and symbols generally for that department, and also heads for checks, notes, and so on for the banks and business houses. I believe, though, it was Louis who undertook to sound Freddy on the subject. I don't know whether he draws on wood or not."

"I had him taught that branch especially and particularly, though I can't say it is his favorite," said the doctor. "He'd like to paint the Landing of Columbus, and

Edith searching for the body of Harold, I dare say, if he could stand up to it."

"He has not disdained to paint slippers," said Alice; "but that craze is dying out, and I should be very glad for him to have a more permanent position. He is so much happier to feel himself earning money, and his earnings have been very useful," she added quietly. Truly, Alice's trials had been also useful.

"Ah! by the way, I begin to realize why our friend Clare never argues," said the doctor. "It is because, as Father McClosky says, 'he only convinces.'"

"In this country," observed Mr. Clare gravely, "we don't say, 'I am convinced,' but 'I am satisfied;' and we are right. Argument may convince, that is, bind a man so that he cannot reply; satisfaction gives him enough light to see the matter as it is for himself. Therefore, while I never argue, I do sometimes try to satisfy."

"I'm not so sure about your etymology," replied the doctor, "but we won't split hairs. I want room for a good knockdown blow. When you say 'light enough to see the matter as it is,' do you mean as *I* see it is, or as *you* see it is, or as it is in itself?"

"The 'Thing-in-itself'?" Mr. Clare hesitated for a moment, then his lurking smile became a broad laugh. "I was awfully tempted," he said; "it was on the end of my tongue to say that 'you Kant do it, you know,' but I won't. I resist the temptation, and stand firm in the pride of virtue."

"But you don't answer my question," said the doctor, trying hard not to smile.

"I will, though, in the Irish fashion, by asking another. Why do you want to see?"

"That depends on *what* I want to see."

"Well, take, for instance, the question lately under discussion. Why did you wish to see the rights of that?"

"Because it was a bone of contention, a thorn in the flesh, the very devil himself buffeting me in person, and I wanted to stop the whole business."

"That is, it was a personal matter, requiring immediate action! Exactly so. Now, tell me, are you convinced as to the ownership of that money?"

"Not quite."

"Are you satisfied about it?"

The doctor laughed. "I see," he said; "the correct rendering of 'Ding-an-sich' is 'The thing as it appears to your wife.' Oh, yes! *I'm* satisfied!"

"Then you have found the only answer that can be given to the question you booked for future discussion, What is Truth?"

"Found it, eh? well, I certainly don't recognize it," said the doctor. "Your ideas of truth are rather limited, my friend."

"They are; limited by my human nature, and the peculiarities of my mental and moral constitution."

"Good! we agree perfectly. The most bigoted Materialist could ask no more."

"Tarry a little," said Ernest Clare; "I have more to say. Though truth to me be relative, in Itself it is Absolute, Unconditioned" —

"Unknowable," said the doctor.

"In Its entirety and for the present, yes; though, for the future, we have the promise that we shall know even as we are known."

"Known! by the Truth? Lord, deliver us! here has this man been palming off religion on us, while I thought he was talking metaphysics."

"A perfectly meaningless term, with which I decline to concern myself," said Mr. Clare; "and you can't escape religion, Dr. Richards, whether you talk physics or metaphysics. For my part, I don't know what people mean by metaphysics and supernatural, when God clothes the grass of the field and notes the fall of the sparrow."

"Oh! mount the table yonder and preach," said the doctor. "You're bursting with it. I can see it in your eye."

"Thanks! but I can get a better grasp of the subject just here," said Mr. Clare, taking the doctor gently but firmly by the collar. "I say, doctor, did you ever experiment upon the blind spot on the eye?"

"You mean where the optic nerve enters it? well, yes, I have a little; but what has that to do with it? and what are you up to now?"

"I was remembering a rather striking analogy that occurred to me the other day; whether, in the spiritual eye, there may not be the converse of that blind spot—that is, a seeing spot?"

"And the rest of the spiritual eye, whatever and wherever it may be, insensible to light? Rather inconvenient, if it were not spiritual light, which is unimportant."

"But suppose this seeing spot widens with use? suppose the more light one sees the more one becomes capable of seeing, until, as St. Paul says, the whole body is full of light?"

"But that is when one's eye is single," said Dr. Richards, "whereas you are supposing a double set of optics."

"Now you quibble," retorted the other good-humoredly. "One might have as many eyes as a fly, yet the *vision* would be single, as you very well know."

"I don't know anything about it," returned the doctor; "vision, indeed! why, people tell me I see things upside down, but I'm not conscious of it. Besides, how could one see the same things, even on your own showing, with the physical and spiritual eye? whatever you mean by that!"

"Do you remember the *Erd Geist* in 'Faust,' Dr. Richards? That was a product of the single vision, I fancy.

"'Im Lebensfluthen, im Thatensturm,
Wall' ich auf und ab,
Webe hin und her!
Geburt und Grab,
Ein ewiges Meer,
Ein wechselnd Weben,
Ein glühend Leben,
So schaff' ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit,
Und wirke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid.'[1]

I forget who paraphrased that last line, —

"'And weave for God the garment thou seest Him by.'"

said Mr. Clare. "It isn't bad, but 'living garment' is even better, perhaps. The two together make up Goethe's meaning."

"Oh! so you give Goethe credit for using his spiritual optics?"

"In right of his poet or prophet-hood. A false prophet — not that Goethe was *that*, except partially like the rest, and much less so than many who are called the truest of the true, — but a false prophet is a prophet still, you know, and woe is unto him according to the falseness of his prophecy."

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[1] A rather free translation is subjoined. As indicated in the text, the last line is a quotation: —

"In the restless stream of living,
'Mid the storm of deeds,
Move I hither, thither,
Weave I to and fro!
Birth and the Grave
— One limitless ocean! —
A changeful Creation
Glowing with Life,
Thus my task at Time's tremulous loom I ply,
And weave for God the Garment thou seest Him by."

"Because?"

"Because his falsehood is a moral fault. He could have seen truly had he purified his heart and life, and used his spiritual eyes."

"Thank fortune! I really feared you were going to say 'and used the grace of God.' I do detest that expression! It is such a mean, cowardly state of mind for a man to be always asking for grace to do this, and rejoicing that he had grace given him to do that. Grace indeed! Has he no backbone of his own?"

"Why, you wouldn't expect a man to breathe without air," said the clergyman, "and why should he see without sunshine? And you'll find *that* etymology quite correct," he added, as he rose to say good-night.

"Etymology? I don't understand."

"Grace — the graces — the Charites — charity — love, as the Revised Version has it. And don't you remember Max Müller's identification of the Charites with the bright Harits, the far-reaching sun-rays? Love and life, the life and love of God; not so very detestable after all, eh? Good-night."

CHAPTER X.

PREACHING AND PRACTICE.

It was a serious grief to Louis, when, following Fritz's example, several of the other young men declared themselves, as Fritz had expressed it, "solid for religion," not to be able to include himself among the number. It was an odd thing, he thought, that he, who had played at being a Christ-kind in his babyhood, whose guide and pattern in his youth had been the life of the Lord Christ, — that he should stand aside unable to believe, while others, till then indifferent, pressed forward to be called by His name. It was easy enough to go to church, and that Louis did quite regularly, sitting always when others rose or knelt, and following every word with patient, wistful anxiety. But there was very little comfort to be got out of church-going, so far as Louis could see; though the sound of Ernest Clare's voice, and the sight of his calm, strong face, gave him sometimes the sensation of one struggling on in utter darkness, who, though he can trace no ray of light, knows that the full, cloudless sunshine is just beyond. But, meanwhile, the darkness is hard to bear; and the wistful pleading of the blue eyes that were fixed so earnestly upon his face went to the very heart of Ernest Clare.

Mr. Clare was slowly becoming a power at St. Andrew's, the unfashionable church to which he had offered his services, gratis, at his first coming to Micklegard. The rector, an elderly man with a large family, always ground down to the earth by fuel and grocery bills, had, at first, looked askance at his unsalaried assistant, as an eccentric whose dangerous social doctrines were likely to get not only himself, but the Church at large, into trouble. Indeed, long years of money anxieties, whereof the care had been faithfully cast upon Him who has promised to bear it, had almost convinced the rector that a situation wherein lay no temptation to be anxious for the morrow would be positively irreligious. He knew too well the blessings of poverty to pray, like pious Agar, to be delivered therefrom; and while his favorite beatitude was "Blessed are the poor," the promise that the meek shall inherit the earth had for him no signification that was at all borne out by his own individual experience.

By such a man as this Ernest Clare was quite content to be lightly esteemed and guarded against. Reading the prayers and lessons, however, in the rector's opinion, could harm no one, and spared a weary voice; even in the baptism of infants, and the visitation of the sick, there is little scope for dynamite, and it was a great comfort to be able to call at will upon one so entirely destitute of vanity or self-assertion. So, by the time the winter came, and the rector got a cold instead of the voice he lost in catching it, he was ready to accept Mr. Clare's offer to preach for him, backed by the promise, voluntarily made, with a smile of affectionate amusement, "not to say a word of which the rector could possibly disapprove."

It was not at all what is usually considered a popular sermon, though of a kind more likely to be popular than is often supposed. The text was, —

"Because I live, ye shall live also."

"Very many men," said the preacher, "have tried to define life, just as they have endeavored to explain what is meant by a personal God, and with about the same success. Our own first Article says, 'There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions.' This is not all of the article, as you will see from your prayer-books, but it is the root-part, which contains and implies all the rest. And you will notice that most of this one sentence that I have read you says what God is *not ;* there are only two words, 'living' (which implies everlasting), and 'true,' to tell us what God *is.* But this, that He is living and true, nay, that He is life and truth, is really all that we need to know about Him. Well, then, I hope some of us are asking, What do we mean by life, and what do we mean by truth? Let us take the latter first.

"Truth is that which a man troweth or believeth; a better definition than one might suppose; but there is another word which will lead us more quickly to the heart of our subject this morning. 'In sooth' and in 'good sooth' are phrases now found only in poetry; yet we could very well spare from our daily conversation more sonorous terms than that one little monosyllable sooth. For it is connected with the Sanskrit word *sat*, or *satya*, meaning truth; *sat* being the participle of the verb *as*, to be. Therefore, when we say, 'Do you in sooth?' we mean simply, 'Do you tell me that which *is?*'

"Now, I once read a book, the author of which was very jubilant over his discovery that this verb *as*, to be, meant originally, simply, to breathe. Thus, if we go back a step farther, and say, 'Do you in sooth?' or, 'Do you tell me that which breathes?' we shall not be long in coming to the conclusion that Truth and Life are identical; and that What is Truth? means exactly the same as What is Life?

"Now, though so many attempts have been made, with only partial success, to define Life, as I told you a while ago, I suppose all of us have a fair working idea of it, at least as regards this outside world. We know that a plant or animal is dead when it ceases, as Herbert Spencer says, to 'correspond with its environment;' that is, to receive something from and return something to the air or water or earth around it. Now, spiritual Life, or eternal Life, as we often call it, is exactly the same. We must correspond with our Environment, in Whom 'we live and move and have our being;' that is, our *breathing*, according to Mr. Matthew Arnold. We must breathe in Truth, and breathe out Love, if we would correspond with *this* environment; and then — because He lives we shall live also. For there is one peculiarity about Life. It cannot stand still, any more than we can cease breathing; it must grow, else it ceases to be Life and becomes Death. And so He says *because* I live ye shall live also. Not merely His disciples, not merely those who profess to believe on Him, but the whole world shall live also. 'The Kingdom of God is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until *the whole* was leavened.'

"If you look back on the story of the world, you will see for yourselves how the history of mankind is a history of progress, of climbing higher and higher. That the world, as a whole, is perceptibly better off, freer, wiser, and purer, than it was even a hundred years ago, is a proposition which I suppose few will controvert; but if I say that all this, and the almost incalculable progress that preceded it, is owing to the Life of Christ which is in the world, there will not fail some to deny it. Yet growth implies life, cannot be without life; and he who refuses to ascribe certain known results to an adequate cause must be able to produce in evidence some other cause capable of producing the same effects. But this is the very point where those who deny that the life of Christ *is*, not *was*, in the world, utterly fail. Also, their strongest point against Christianity is that the lives of those who do not believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ often resemble more nearly what we call His human character than the lives of professing Christians. Well, why not? He has told us Himself that He does not care to be called Lord, Lord, unless we do the things that He says; and if we really do the things that He says, if we are pure, true, unselfish, and loving, then, whether we know it or not, His life *is in us*, and will transform us into its own likeness, just as surely as the life of the acorn transforms air, earth, and water into the likeness of an oak.

"Perhaps there are some here who think that Jesus Christ was simply a good man, not even a perfect man, far less the God-man. In fact, I have often heard just such words from some whom I see here before me.

"You think highly of Christianity as a moral system, and only wish its professors lived up to their duties. Well, I wish so too. I wish all who call themselves Christians were one-tenth as kind, as unselfish, as disinterested, as some of you who call yourselves infidels. But the difference between you is simply this. The humblest, the most faulty, sincere Christian knows that whatever good there may be in him is the fruit of that divine Life; while you are very apt to consider your virtues your own, and your faults the result of circumstances, due to heredity, perhaps, or education, or the cross-grained perversity of your next neighbor. And you are quite right; your faults are due to just these things. They are a part of the Kingdom of Death, which the Life of Christ came into the world to conquer.

"It is said that 'if to-night a new star were created in some far-distant constellation, ages would pass before its light could reach us, but only a few seconds before the earth would feel its presence.' And would not the influence of that star be just the same whether we knew of it or not? Would our world be deflected from its present orbit one hair's-breadth more or less because that new star could not be found upon a single astronomical chart? The name of Jesus Christ may not be found upon your guide to the stars, dear friends, but His life is nevertheless within and around you, making you better as you yield to it, or worse as you resist it. For as individuals you *can* resist it, perhaps, forever, though, as a race, humanity must and will grow more and more into His image and likeness, Who *is*, that is, Who *breathes*, Life, Love, and Truth."

"Now, I suppose," said Dr. Richards, who waited outside the church door, with Alice on his arm and Freddy in his chair, whereof Louis served as propeller, — "now, I suppose you think you have settled the whole question, and convinced everybody by that sermon?"

"On the contrary," replied Mr. Clare. "There's a verse that always comes into my mind the moment I finish preaching. I wish it wouldn't, for it has rather a depressing effect at times, so that I am compelled to reason myself into optimism again before I can go on with the service," with a mischievous glance, as he lent a hand to help the Ark over a gutter.

"Optimism! humph! I gave you credit for greater knowledge of the world. What is the verse?"

"'The sermon being ended,
All turned and descended;
The pikes went on stealing,
The eels went on eeling.
Much delighted were they,
But preferred the old way!'

"It is from St. Anthony's sermon to the fishes, I believe, but that is all I know of the poem," said Mr. Clare.

"Ah! there's a deal of human nature in fishes," said the doctor, laughing. "Well, then, what is the good of preaching?"

"There's more good in practising, I admit; still a sermon does sometimes come back to one — like Longfellow's Arrow, don't you know," replied the clergyman. "But I must say," he added, laughing, "that I don't set quite such a value upon preaching as some people. I should not, for example, if I had undertaken to 'Look Backward,' like Mr. Bellamy, have found my ideal Sunday in listening to a sermon by telephone. It doesn't quite fulfil one's idea of worship, however excellent the sermon."

"Worship? why, the life they led in the year 2000 and the work they had done for the world was a better worship than if they had whined away on their knees for a month."

"No doubt; better worship, and the best of divine service; *but* — I don't believe that when men learn to work together they will cease to pray together. This new Cathedral they are going to build in New York is to me one of the grandest and most heart-cheering signs of the times; but even *that*, I hope, won't hold the people when the day of freedom really dawns. And when poverty is abolished, and every man stands equal with his brother-man — before man and before God, — then, I believe, from that mighty host will rise such a shout of loyalty to the Captain of their Salvation as will shake the Kingdom of Death to its centre. Cannot you imagine the wild — no, not wild — the disciplined enthusiasm with which that army of industry, and therefore of liberty, shall sing, —

" 'Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
Great David's greater Son,
Hail, in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun.
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free;
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity'?

And the new meaning there will be in so many hymns? 'All hail the power of Jesus' Name,' 'Crown Him with many crowns,' and another, the campaign song now as then of His soldiers, —

"'He marches in front of His banner unfurled,
Which He raised that His own might find Him,
And the Holy Church throughout all the world
Falls into rank behind Him.'

Ah! Dr. Richards, you may pessimize to your heart's content, but, nevertheless, —

"'We march to victory
With the Cross of the Lord before us!'"

"I wish you did," said the doctor. "I'd veil my crest to that Banner with the best grace in the world. But I haven't much faith in the future."

"You haven't much faith in God."

"Why, I can't shut my eyes to facts, neither can I believe in a God who is less than omnipotent or less than perfectly good. Yet one of these hypotheses is necessary to reconcile the existence of God and the existence of evil."

"As to omnipotence," replied Mr. Clare, "it is a very singular thing that those whose very name for the Deity is 'the Unknowable' should be so ready to deny Him omnipotence, an attribute as incomprehensible by our finite minds as infinite space or everlasting time."

"That is *your* way of getting out of it," said the doctor.

"It is simply a statement of facts. We can know of God only what He has revealed to us, through Nature, His 'living Garment,' through the Scriptures, and in Jesus Christ, 'the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.'"

"Well, Nature and the Sermon on the Mount are about as much alike as chalk and cheese," said Dr. Richards.

"'Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapor, Wind and Storm, fulfilling His word,'" said Mr. Clare. "You've been reading Mill, Dr. Richards, and he has disagreed with you. I remember, too, that Tennyson represents Nature as crying,—

"'A thousand types have gone;
I care for nothing, all shall go.'

But Nature does care for something, and if she casts aside a thousand types, it is only as the fruit-tree casts away millions of petals which have done their work in protecting the infant fruit. Nature strives always after *one* type, *one* ideal; and will have attained it when man has fulfilled the command laid upon him at his creation, to 'replenish the earth and subdue it.'"

"But could not an *All*-good, *All*-powerful Creator have prevented a great deal of sin and misery by making the world perfect in the beginning?"

"I don't think we can reason about what God might or could have done; that belongs to the realm of the Unknowable. What we can reason about and are entirely justified —that is, *made just*—in trying to understand, is what He has done. He is life, therefore Nature lives, and we live. But life is evidenced by growth, and growth depends chiefly upon effort. And hence, Dr. Richards, knowledge or virtue or muscular strength must be developed in you by your own exertions, they cannot be won for you by another."

"How about imputed righteousness?"

"There's not a word in Scripture about imputed righteousness, though it does say that God will not impute iniquity; that is, that he sees us as we ought to be, as we will be; and that all His blows and chastisements are simply to set free this divine ideal, as a sculptor liberates the angel imprisoned in his block of marble. Does the sculptor impute roughness or lack of graceful form to the marble?"

Dr. Richards turned suddenly and looked down at his wife, who had at the moment leaned rather heavily upon his arm. Then he replied, though with less *verve* than before, —

"Well, you haven't touched *my* spiritual optic nerve yet, Mr. Clare. How about the millions who die still in the rough, and live on in eternal torment?"

"I think you mean *everlasting*, not eternal, which has nothing to do with time. And no one who used his eyes, Dr. Richards, would claim that the angel is always liberated in *this* life."

"Then, you believe" —

"What I believe, my dear friend, is of very little consequence, unless you can make it out from what I *do*. And yet I do believe in the Love of God and His uncovenanted mercies, to which those He has promised and made sure are as a mote in the sunshine to the boundless atmosphere in which it floats."

"I suppose it makes you happier," said the doctor, with a sigh; "and I never interfere with any one's happiness," he added with a glance at his wife.

When the Richardses had been left at their own door, and Mr. Clare and Louis went on alone, the latter said, —

"Mr. Clare, I'd give my right hand if I could believe all you said in your sermon to-day."

"Keep your right hand to serve God with, Louis," was the reply. "If you were more likely to believe without it than with it, He Himself would take it from you."

"I don't think I am likely to believe either way," was the boy's reply. "You see, my father taught me to imitate Christ, to be a little Christ-child, as he called it, yet to think Christianity itself only a fairy tale. And I can't get over the habit," he added; "*I can't* think of Christ as alive now, or believe that He is God. To me He is dead as King Arthur and Washington and Barbarossa are dead."

"And when you wish to believe Him alive, is it that you may serve Him better, or that you may possess the happiness in the perpetual consciousness of His presence which others enjoy ?" asked the clergyman, smiling tenderly upon the wistful face upturned to him.

"The last, of course," returned Louis honestly, "though perhaps I *could* serve Him better, if you mean working for others," he added.

Mr. Clare smiled. "Leave the better service to Him; He knows what He wants from you," he said. "For the rest, Prince Louis, are you following out your father's teaching in asking or wishing *any* thing for yourself? Is that like Jesus Christ, who pleased not Himself?"

"Then what must I do?"

"Do what you believe," said Mr. Clare. "In fact, neither you nor any of us *can* do otherwise. What we believe, that will we do; nothing else. What we do not show in our lives, we do *not yet* entirely believe. There is no escape from that logic, Louis, terrible though it be." He paused, hesitated, then went on with a smile. "For I have just shown you that you have not been living up to what faith you have, which is, after all, not a little. Therefore, you see, it fails just so far of being a real faith, and you cannot ask for more until you have made the most of what you already have. Only go on working, not thinking at all of yourself, living for others, and some day — if not in this world, at least in the next — your eyes will be opened like those of the disciples at Emmaus, and you will say, 'Did not my heart burn within me, while He talked with me by the way?'"

"In the next world!" said Louis thoughtfully. "But if there be no other world, Mr. Clare?"

"Ah! my boy, that you must be content to take — yet a while — on trust. When your eyes see the King in His beauty, the land that is very far off will become a reality to you; not until. The best — I was about to say the sole — argument for immortality is my text of this morning: 'Because He lives, we shall live also.' 'And this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.'"

"I'm like Dr. Richards," said Louis, smiling sadly. "You don't touch my spiritual optic nerve. But I am glad you tell me *to do,* Mr. Clare, for I want to believe, and cannot. Yet the Herr Pastor told me once," he continued, smiling, "not to put my trust in anything that I did, for that my righteousness was as filthy rags, and that I must believe in order to be saved."

"The Herr Pastor was quite right, my boy. Your righteousness, and mine also, *is* as filthy rags compared with His, and compared also with the wedding garment in which we shall sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And have I not told you that, as your faith grows, your salvation from sin grows also? I have not told you that you will ever be able to *say* that you believe in this world, because I have known of so many whose lives have acknowledged Him while their lips, to their latest breath, denied Him. Am I a poor comforter, Louis?" he added kindly, as the boy looked down and sighed.

"No, no; I was thinking of Dr. Richards. He is one of those men you spoke of, and, perhaps, never will believe as you do."

"Frederick Richards is one of the bravest men I ever knew," said Mr. Clare.

He was a very silent man for the next few days; also very gentle and tender towards all around him, especially his wife, whom he watched as she went about the house or sat at work beside him, with eyes of wistful comprehension. It was not until the week was nearly gone that she crept up to him one evening, in the early twilight, and silently laid her head upon his breast.

"Yes, my dear, yes," he said tenderly. "I know all about it, Alice; there is little about yourself that you need to tell me in words, after all these years. But we had better not talk about it, I think; for I might say something to disturb your faith once more, and I should be sorry to do that."

"I don't think you could, *now*," she replied. "It is no new thing, Fred; I think it has been growing within me for a long time. And it is not such faith as I thought I had once."

"As you thought you had?"

"It was little more than thinking; I did not know what belief really meant. Oh, don't say we must not talk about it, dear; I cannot bear any forbidden subjects between us *now*."

He drew her nearer, and kissed her, smiling. "Now?" he asked gently.

"It seems as though I had never loved you until now," she replied. "Years ago — oh, Fred, can you forgive me! — I believed, as I had been taught, that it was a sin to marry an infidel; but it would have killed me to give you up, and so I did what I thought wrong in defiance."

"Not quite that, I think," he said tenderly. "It was only that your heart was stronger than your theology, that's all."

"One was true, and therefore did the truth, and the other was false," she replied. "But then, when trouble came, I looked upon it as punishment, or, rather, vengeance, for what was no sin at all. As if I were so much holier than you," she cried indignantly; "you whose noble life taught me the emptiness and selfishness of my own. 'Unequally yoked together!' If we have been, the superiority has been on your side. If truth be life, you have more of it than I; and I have looked up to you and learned of you always."

"Until now?" he said rather sadly.

"Oh! Fred, you have much to teach me yet. It is you who see things as they are, truly, purely, nobly; and I whose eyes are blinded by the mists of earth. Only in one thing I have the advantage of you."

"And that?" he asked.

She rose to her feet, — for till then she had knelt beside his chair, — and, drawing his head to her bosom, kissed him with such kisses as in all their life together she had never before given him.

"I *know* that you are mine now, and always, for life and death, for time and eternity," she cried passionately. "I am not afraid to let myself love you now that neither life nor death can ever come between us. God has given you back to me, my husband!"

BOOK III.

FLOOD AND FIRE.

CHAPTER I.

"O'ER CRAG AND TORRENT, TILL THE NIGHT IS GONE."

By the time the spring came again, it had become quite customary for Mr. Clare to preach at least once on Sunday at St. Andrew's, and the rector had been nearly satisfied that such Socialism as his colleague was at all likely to preach was very harmless Socialism, indeed, scarcely deserving the name. Also, the rector was inclined to look through very rose-colored glasses at one who could bring to church such a stiff-necked generation as Dr. Richards and Karl Metzerott, even though the former might come partly for love of his wife and son, and the latter chiefly through jealousy of the preacher's influence on Louis and at "Prices," where the Emperor had begun to feel bitterly conscious of a rival.

Yet Mr. Clare put forward no claim either to supremacy or even influence; it was simply the effect of his personality that brought such crowds to St. Andrew's, and made his lightest word a command to his friends and followers at "Prices." So, at least, said Karl Metzerott; perhaps the truth was that Ernest Clare's personality was as nearly transparent as is possible to human nature; it was not himself, but the truth that was in him, of which all round felt the power. But it is a question whether a due appreciation of this fact would have retarded the growth of the unfriendly feeling whereof Karl had only just begun to be conscious. Nevertheless, "Prices," hitherto so united, had begun to show signs of splitting into two camps.

There was no open division, but the waters were troubled by the Spirit of God, and the word had gone forth amongst them, "If the Lord be God, then follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him."

Mr. Clare's lectures, as they were called, on Sunday evening were overwhelmingly well attended, though the magnificent rendering of chorus, hymn, and anthem, that accompanied them, doubtless formed no unimportant part of the attraction. There were no formal prayers, an omission that scandalized some excellent people, including the Herr Pastor Schaefer, who took the duty upon himself to remonstrate with the delinquent. Mr. Clare's reply was somewhat singular.

"'Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.'

"If the hidden fire be not there, Herr Pastor," he said, "how can it possibly tremble? If it be, the music will supply all it can ask; and if it be only a spark, I don't want to extinguish it by the cold water of criticism."

"But I do not understand you at all, Mr. Clare," was the reply; "surely it is every one's duty to pray."

"You have been with them nearly twenty years, my friend; have they ever prayed with you?"

"It is quite true," said the pastor, in genuine trouble and perplexity, "that religion seems to have little power over men in these days. Very few men ever pray at all; but it is not my fault: I pray *with* them, or offer to do so; and there my responsibility ends."

Mr. Clare was silent a moment, then he said gently, "If they ever seem willing to let me pray with them, I assure you I shall not be slow to comply."

He was very silent and thoughtful for the remainder of the day, and in the evening propounded a very strange question to Father McClosky.

"I say, Bryan, if you were a shepherd, a literal shepherd, you know, and one of your sheep were to stray into the desert and be lost, what would you do?"

"Sure, I trust I'd seek till I found it," replied the Father, with a look of inquiry.

"And if you couldn't find it one way you'd try another, eh? You wouldn't simply stand on the edge of the wilderness and cry 'Co-nan, co-nan!' and then turn back satisfied, saying, 'Well, it's not my fault; I've called you, and there my responsibility ends'?"

Father McClosky laughed, but quickly looked grave and troubled. "Sure, we clergy have much to answer for," he said. "There's mighty few of us, maybe none, but could say his *mea culpa* to the sins of negligence and indifference. We're all mighty unselfish about responsibility, and perfectly willing to make any one that wants it a present of our share."

"I don't think that peculiarity is confined to the clergy," said Mr. Clare.

If it were, the remainder of this chapter might have remained a blank.

For the situation of Micklegard was, as this story has frequently indicated, upon a river, the physical beauty of which was the pride of every dweller upon its banks, though its moral character might be marred by treachery and fickleness. It was fed by mountain streams which were liable to a sudden rise at the time of the melting of the winter snows, or at any season after continuous heavy rain, and these floods, or "high water," as they were euphoniously termed by those who seemed rather to prefer to have their cellars washed out occasionally, sometimes rose to the height of devastating inundations. The cause of their increased frequency and destructiveness was by some said to be the will of God; by others, a judgment on the wicked; others still ascribed it to the reckless destruction of the forests that had once clothed the hills to the top, and by retaining much of the snow on their sturdy branches, and, in spring, lessening the influence of the sun, had prevented its too rapid melting. That these views were at all reconcilable, that the will of God might be that the hills should bring righteousness to the people by teaching the reckless and money-loving that they could not safely trifle with the forces of nature, few seemed able to understand. Yet, if this lesson had been thoroughly learned, and followed out to its logical consequences, the calamity of which I have now to write would certainly never have occurred.

The winter which had just ended had been unusually mild; very little snow had fallen, even in the hills; but the months of April and May had been marked by an unusual rainfall, and the Mickle River, though not over its banks, stood at a height which, earlier in the year, would have been decidedly alarming, but which was viewed at this season with complacency as an excellent preparation for the summer droughts.

Ascension Day fell this year near the end of May, and the three Rogation days preceding it were, as usual, employed as days of prayer for spiritual but especially for temporal blessings. In some of the churches constant intercession was carried on from six in the morning to nine at night, but of these St. Andrew's was not one.

"I fear I shall never be able to put much heart into a petition for earthly blessings," said the rector to Ernest Clare, "though I would not say so publicly; and, of course, it is quite right to ask God's blessing on the fruits of the earth," he added apologetically; "but to me 'Thy Will be done' includes everything."

"'Give us this day our daily bread,'" returned the other gravely.

"Yes, yes, I know; we have the best authority for it, I don't deny that; but it seems to me more childlike just to trust God for things of earth, and spend one's time in prayer for things of heaven."

"'Thy Will be done *on earth*,'" replied the younger clergyman, "and His will is—as He has told us—to clothe and feed us, as He clothes the grass of the field and feeds the sparrows. And that will shall be done one day."

"Ah! there you are with your Communism," said the rector. "Well, it's only a matter of feeling, and, I dare say, I'm wrong about it."

"I wish we all had your faith, sir," said Mr. Clare; "but don't you think one sometimes learns to pray by needing to pray for bread? Then, afterwards, one can pray for the Bread of Heaven."

"There is no doubt about that," said the rector.

Ascension Day brought another heavy rainstorm to swell the Mickle River,—a storm which increased, with the accompaniment of furious winds, during the night, and on Friday. About the middle of the afternoon Mr. Clare, who, in his capacity of carpenter, had gone up-town to attend to a job, was passing a telegraph-office on his way home, when he heard his name called loudly and anxiously; and, turning round, saw a young operator, well known to him and us, by the name of Heinz Rolf, with his body half out of the window, beckoning wildly.

"Good God, Mr. Clare! the most horrible disaster!" he gasped, as the clergyman obeyed the summons. "The dam—the Cannomore Dam—has burst; forty feet of water rushing down the Cannomore Valley—thirty thousand people in the water *now* — and" — he paused with his eyes on Mr. Clare's.

The Irish mind is not, like the German, fundamentally geographical; and for a moment the clergyman did not entirely grasp the situation.

"How terrible! When did it happen?" he said, with as yet no sense that the matter might concern him or his.

"The last message came a few minutes ago. Operator stood at her post till the last gasp — ticked over the wires, 'This is my last message,' — then, I suppose, she was swept away, for we can't get an answer from anywhere near there. The next news we have of the flood" —

"I see!" said Mr. Clare suddenly. "I see. The next news will be brought by the water itself!"

For a moment the two men stared at each other in horror. Then Mr. Clare said, "How much time have we to get ready for it? one hour? two?"

"Can't hardly tell," said one of the older operators, looking up from his instrument. "Of course, she loses force and swiftness as she comes along, and it won't be no forty feet that we'll get; but, with the river we've got now, I guess we'll have all the water we want. We've telephoned the mayor's office, and, probably, he'll have the bells rung, to warn the people. My folks will have the flood over the tops of their chimneys, I guess, but I don't see no way to help it. I can't leave that door till the flood comes in at the window, or I won't, anyway."

"I'll see to them," said Ernest Clare, "and to your family, too, Heinz. I say, I suppose 'Prices' is above high-water mark?"

"It's six foot, about, above all the high-water mark we have *now*," said the operator grimly. "I don't say where it'll be to-morrow; but, maybe, their third story won't be *very* wet."

"It's as safe as anywhere," said Heinz, "except the tops of the hills."

"Just so," replied the other, and Mr. Clare hurried away.

"I suppose this is the answer to your prayers in the early part of the week," said Dr. Richards, when Mr. Clare warned him of the coming danger.

"I could not tell you about that," returned the other, "it is hard to decide upon the meaning of a message until one has read it through. Meanwhile, my rooms at 'Prices' are entirely at your service; and I should advise you to take valuables, papers, and clothing. You'll have time to pack them up if you're not too long about it. Drive over in your buggy, doctor, and I'll send a boy for the Ark."

Not every one, however, was as easy to move as the Richardses.

"Is it a flood?" asked one Irish family whom he visited and warned. "Sure, floods is nothin' when you're used to 'em, your Honor." And not a step would they budge, until they and their shanty were washed away together.

Most people refused to believe that a flood was possible at that season of the year, or that the bursting of the Cannomore Dam could possibly affect the Mickle River.

But at seven o'clock in the evening the river was over its banks; at midnight it was within a foot and a half of the level of "Prices," and reported to be still rising. There was no rush of a wall of water at this distance from the scene of the catastrophe; only a slow, steady, terrible, irresistible rising. Where now was the beautiful river whereof they had boasted? Instead of it, a boiling, foaming devil rushed headlong by them; its yellow waters swirling with wreckage and horrible with corpses. Truly, their pride was turned to their destruction!

"There are those families at the lower mill," said Mr. Clare suddenly; "has any one heard of them?"

"They were warned," said some one, "but whether the blame fools moved out or not, I can't say."

"If you will lend me your boat," said Mr. Clare, "I will see after them."

"You? there's work for you here, Mr. Clare; besides, the current"—

"Plenty of boats are out already," said another; "they'll be seen after."

"There's room for one more," replied the clergyman quietly, "and I didn't win the silver oar in the single-scull race at college for nothing. Look up on the hills there, black with refugees from the water! Who will help me to bring them off?"

Not one, but three boat's crews were immediately at his service, and more would have been forthcoming had the boats at command been more numerous.

"You, Louis? I don't know," said the clergyman kindly, as the boy pressed to his side. "What would your father say to me?"

"I shall go too," said Karl Metzerott.

The rain beat fiercely down upon the seething river, the wind churned the foul waters into foam which it dashed in their faces as if in bitter mockery of their pitiful attempts to brave the power of the elements; beams and timbers, heavy enough to grind their boats into powder, shouldered each other down the stream, and impeded each other's progress, as though they had been human beings engaged in the race for wealth. Over all lay darkness, for the gas-works were long since under water, but the feeble light of the lanterns they had brought flashed now on a man's face set in the agony of death, the open eyes staring upward as if in accusation; now on heavy tresses of a woman's long wet hair, wrapped by the wind round and round the beam to which she had clung till her strength failed her.

"Boys!" said Mr. Clare.

He stood to windward of them, and his every word could be distinctly heard. The men paused in the very act of manning the boats, and turned to look at him. His hat was off, and the lantern in his hand flashed fitfully, as it was beaten by the wind, upon his pure, strong face, and the eyes fixed upon them in longing tenderness, as though they also were in danger and needed rescue.

"Let us pray," said Mr. Clare.

Certainly Fritz Rolf set the example, but no man there waited to find it out. Every hat was off in an instant.

"'O SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD, WHO BY THY CROSS AND PRECIOUS BLOOD HAST REDEEMED US, SAVE US, AND HELP US, WE HUMBLY BESEECH THEE, O LORD.'"

The next moment they were in the full course of the river, rushing with it down, down, — where!

There was no power of rowing upstream, and no need to row down. They could only keep the boat as steady as possible, and fend off the wreckage from every side, every man's eyes strained meanwhile for any chance of saving life.

At last Ernest Clare gave a great cry. Dancing gayly down the river, as if at play upon the fearful tide, was a heavy, wooden cradle, hollowed from a single block. As it floated past him, Mr. Clare caught from it a little wailing baby, perhaps six months old. He gave it to Louis, who sat in the stern, and tried to steer as far as steering was possible. "Button it inside your coat," he said, and Louis tried to obey. The child felt the grateful warmth, hushed its wailing, and even fell asleep from exhaustion. The little face peeped out just below the collar of the young man's coat, his arm was round it, and he felt with a strange sensation the feeble throbbing of its baby bosom, and the sweet, warm baby breath stealing upward to his neck.

Now a huge beam went crashing against the window of a house round which the waters raged madly.

"It's no matter," said Fritz; "the man that lives there is a fellow with some snap to him. He moved out his family early this afternoon."

The inhabitants of the next house had not been so fortunate, for faces were dimly visible in the dark windows, and voices were heard crying for rescue in the name of God.

One of the boats was filled with them, father, mother, and eight children, wet, cold, and miserable, crouching wretchedly in the bottom of the boat, and half disposed, as it tossed seemingly at the mercy of the stream, to think it a bad exchange for the house, which at least, as yet, stood firm.

Boat-load after boat-load was thus rescued, and set ashore at the nearest point whence they could make their way to a place of succor; for all the churches and public buildings, and many private houses, stood open that night, and warm food, shelter, and dry clothing were ready for all who claimed them.

And still the boats went on, on with the current, upon their errand of mercy.

Here delayed by the wreckage, there set free by a blow from some passing timber, — still they kept steadily on down the stream. And now there came to Louis a strange experience. For it seemed to him that before them moved a white Figure, wherein he recognized that which once trod the Sea of Galilee, and through the rushing of the waves and the roaring of the fierce wind there seemed to fall upon his ears the whisper, "Fear not, it is I." And as all his life he had followed the Lord Christ, so now, he steered after the glimmer of that white form seen or fancied. And by faith or fancy it led them on till daybreak.

When they had returned home, drenched and exhausted, Louis laid his hand upon Mr. Clare's arm, and smiled into his face with white lips but strangely shining eyes. "Mr. Clare," he said, "oh, Mr. Clare, I have my wish, that I tried not to wish for. He has been very good to me. I *know* now that He is God, and that He could not — oh! He *could* not stay in Heaven while we suffered and died on earth; He *must* come down to help and save us!"

"He is saving us now, Louis," said Mr. Clare, "saving us by what seems the extremity of His wrath. 'O Saviour of the world, Who by Thy cross and precious blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord'!"

CHAPTER II.

"POLLY, PUT THE KETTLE ON."

With the breathing of that first prayer and the attainment of Louis' wish, the breach between the two parties at "Prices" became a self-evident fact; and though across the breach the bands of good-fellowship still held fast, even these no longer bound together the members of one household, but connected two opposing camps, the relations between which were manifestly strained.

Karl Metzerott called himself a reasonable man. He professed to have no personal feeling in the matter, no personal grudge against Mr. Clare. "No interloper," he said, "could ever be to 'Prices' what he, Karl Metzerott, had been; and as for present influences, he was abundantly ready to welcome any that were good. Had he ever opposed this man Clare until he came out in his true colors? cunning, canting priest that he was! As for Louis, what he chose to believe was his own affair; it was a free country, surely, as far as a man's conscience was concerned; and if what satisfied his father was not good enough for him, it was nobody's business but that of their two selves."

It was quite true that Mr. Clare was exerting all his powers, and putting forth his utmost influence; for one of those crucial questions had arisen which try men's souls, and separate between the good and the evil.

The body of water which was known as Cannomore Lake had been increased immensely beyond its normal proportions by a dam of unusual height, and, as some undertook to prove by the laws of mechanics, of illegal proportions and construction. It was owned by a club of wealthy sportsmen, and used as a fishing-ground; and it was stated that the waste-gates, which the extra proportions and alleged unscientific construction of the dam made more than ever necessary, had been permanently stopped up, to prevent the escape of the fish; that the very building of the dam had been earnestly protested against; that the inhabitants of the valley had lived in constant terror of it; and that some months before the actual catastrophe it had been pronounced by skilled engineers in a dangerous condition. But the lake had also been used as a reservoir to supply the town which had suffered most heavily from its breaking bounds; and some were inclined to cast a part of the blame upon the authorities there; but it was a question whether in this matter they could have taken any measures, which would have been at all sufficient, without the consent of the club; since the dam could only have been thoroughly repaired after draining off the water, and at great cost.

"And of course in the height of the fishing season letting off the water was not to be dreamed of," was the angry murmur; "for what to a club of millionnaires were the lives of a few thousand factory hands, compared with the enjoyment of their favorite sport?"

There were not wanting, either, allusions to the feeding of the carp in the Roman fish-ponds, which, it was darkly hinted, preceded by not so *very* many years the fall of the Roman empire.

Against this spirit Ernest Clare felt it imperative to make all the stand possible. It was in itself but a trickle, yet it threatened a more terrible inundation than that of Cannomore, and he was ready, if necessary, to stop the leak with his own body.

"These are but newspaper reports," he said. "No one knows, or can know, where lies the blame, until a thorough investigation has been held, which will not be possible for some time yet. And, even then, human justice is not infallible, and this is a matter of which it will be difficult to take an impartial view. Leave the question of retribution in the hands of God; you have enough to do in helping those who have suffered."

"Ah!" said Karl Metzerott, "if there were a God, and He'd *do* it, I'd ask nothing better."

"See here, my friend," said Mr. Clare, "suppose each and every member of that club to be as culpable as you believe him; would you exchange with him? his money and his guilt against your honest poverty and self-respect?"

"By ——! I'd see him in —— first!" was the reply.

"Then you are better off than he, as you deserve to be, and God *is* doing right by both of you," said Mr. Clare.

"Do you suppose Henry Randolph would exchange with *me?*" was the scornful question.

"I have no opinion to offer about Mr. Randolph," said Ernest Clare, "except, which indeed is not an opinion but a fact, that notwithstanding his very heavy losses by this flood, both here and at Cannomore, he has given more liberally to the Relief Fund than any other man in Micklegard."

"And so he ought!" growled the shoemaker.

It may be imagined that such arguments did not alter the feeling in the shoemaker's heart, though, no doubt, the clergyman's influence worked powerfully to prevent the fire from spreading. But what was a real surprise to Mr. Clare was to find Pastor Schaefer openly in the ranks of his adversaries, and waving the banner of insurrection!

Mr. Clare now prayed and preached in the hall every Sunday night, and all the Emperor's power was insufficient to prevent him, since the president and a majority of the board of managers were on the side of peace and order. The Herr Pastor meanwhile seemed to have picked up the other's cast-off mantle; for he came out strongly in favor of Communism, which he found plenty of texts to justify, failing not to lay great stress on the sudden deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, the first renegades from that early Commune. And though he duly ascribed these to the hand of God, and even quoted "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord," it was a material vengeance, which his hearers were quite able to appreciate, and, if need were, to imitate; therefore, it filled the church, and largely increased the pastor's popularity.

Mr. Clare, however he might feel at having his own artillery thus turned against him, — or, rather, against the banner of the Prince of Peace, — gave no sign to the world; and, while he watched intently for an opportunity to conciliate his opponents, exhorted his followers to peace, with such words as "Love your enemies," "Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's," and "The powers that be are ordained of God," therefore their power can only be restricted or withdrawn by methods which are according to God's will. And as His will is our individual sanctification, anything, any political measure, — such as bribery, conspiracy, or violence, — which tends to make individuals worse men rather than better, is not according to that will, and in the long-run is destructive of the very ends which it is supposed to promote.

There were not wanting instances from history to support this view, of which perhaps the strongest, next to the abolition of slavery in America, was the first, contrasted with the second, expulsion of the Stuarts from the throne of England. For he showed that, great as was Cromwell, and thorough as has been the victory in our times of the principles which he espoused, his mistaken method of advocating them, while it won a brief victory, secured as speedy a reverse. The beheading of Charles I. contained in itself the seed of the Restoration; but in 1688 the people had learned wisdom. The Seven Bishops unwittingly inaugurated a bloodless revolution when they preached, by word and example, the doctrine of passive resistance; and the dynasty then installed still holds possession of the English throne. "It is a great mistake in statecraft," he ended, "to give a bad cause the advantage of a martyr."

But it may be readily imagined that to men blinded by anger, and quivering from personal wrongs, such doctrines as these were eminently unpalatable. Even Father McClosky, though in public he stood by his friend stanchly, shook his head in private over the reference to James II., who was, he said, "a true son of the Church."

Mr. Clare, however, admitted this point so immediately that the Father finally compromised upon the assurance — given and received by himself — that "many a big fool was in the bosom of Holy Church; but, sure, he'd be a bigger fool entirely if he wasn't!"

One pleasant incident had broken the strain and stress of these days of trial. For more than forty-eight hours Micklegard had been cut off from the outside world. The railways were under water, the telegraph lines were down; the gas and water works were flooded; not a drop of milk was to be had, and a famine was threatened; but by prompt industry the last calamity was averted; and when a train at last rolled into the city, supplies had been gathered from "over the hills and far away," to meet the demands, not only of home consumption, but also of the just arrived extra mouths.

The food question was naturally the all-important one at "Prices," and in Miss Sally's department, and was under-going a thorough though informal discussion in that lady's little sitting-room on the day of the arrival of the before-mentioned train. The baby, whom Mr. Clare had rescued and Louis had brought home, contributed very decidedly to the informality of the proceedings, since he lay, peaceful and happy, upon the wide, calico-covered lounge, while Miss Sally, with the devoted air of a troubadour serenading his lady, ground out, from a very small, round music-box, held close at his ear, the mournful strains of "Home, sweet home!"

Nobody seemed to consider the situation at all a comical one. Karl Metzerott occupied his favorite position on the side of the table, and Polly was almost hidden by the huge account-book wherefrom she was reading the receipts and expenditures of the last week.

"The thing of it is, we've fed half of South Micklegard without charging a cent," she concluded, "so, of course, we've lost by it considerable already, and the question is, how much longer we can keep the thing up."

"You can't let people starve," said Miss Sally, looking round from her music.

"But now that the city is issuing rations" —

"Confound the city!" said Karl Metzerott. "Still, we can't let our shareholders suffer; most of them have lost enough as it is. It might be best for me to see the mayor about that; and then, if we could call a general meeting of shareholders" —

But what this meeting was to have accomplished will never be known; for at this moment the shrill, wheezy strains of the music-box were taken up so softly and tenderly that it seemed an angel's whisper rather than a mere mortal violin.

> "Home, home, sweet, sweet home!
> Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!"

sang the violin, with soft exultation; while those within the room looked around amused, yet scarcely surprised, for violins were as plenty as blackberries in that community. But, when the measure became brisker, and the strain vividly exhortatory of a certain "Polly" to "put the kettle on," in order that the company might "all take tea," there was a sudden look of surprise, and — something else — on her namesake's countenance, while Karl Metzerott roared in such stentorian tones that it was quite a mercy he didn't wake the baby, —

"Franz Schaefer, *bei Donder!* Come in, you villain!"

So Franz — but was it indeed Franz who "came fiddling into the room"? twisting and turning about the jingling air with that magical bow of his, and tangling it so inextricably with Howard Payne's immortal melody that it was easy to see how, to him, no place would be home where Polly did *not* put the kettle on! If it were Franz, he had learned a language wherein his tongue was neither dull nor slow; but there was the same honest smile upon the face of the man of thirty that had once illuminated the countenance of the boy; and when he threw down his violin — or no! I misrepresent — even at that supreme moment, he laid it down as tenderly as a new-born baby — and then caught Polly in his arms and deliberately kissed her, she felt that it was still the boy's true heart that beat against her own.

"Hurrah for the fellow who has learned to take his own part!" cried the Emperor; while Franz, without an idea of being witty, answered seriously, "In an orchestra, Mr. Metzerott, that is a very necessary thing!"

It soon transpired that he had by no means given up the position in the orchestra in B——, where he had made such an excellent reputation, though he confessed to an intention of returning to America when this same reputation should have grown to such a height as to entitle him to a good place and fat salary under the Stars and Stripes. And that it was his intention that Polly should share the present honors of first violin and the possible future fatness, was as apparent as that she considered the difference of age at thirty and thirty-three by no means as absurd as it had seemed at eighteen and twenty-one.

It was all very natural, perfectly natural, Miss Sally said, with a sigh; wondering the while whom she could ever find to fill Polly's place; so prompt, accurate, abhorrent of waste, even to a fault, and generally business-like as she had always been. And she was very patient with the reveries into which Polly now fell, even at the crucial period of the twelve-o'clock dinner, — with her calling of wrong tables, and attendants out of their proper order, whereby wrath and confusion were introduced into the kitchen department of "Prices;" and with her occasional mild oblivion as to the staying powers of a barrel of sugar and the sudden rise in the price of coffee.

In truth, Polly's youth had come upon her suddenly and carried her off her feet; but, with this exception and her swain's unusual constancy, there was nothing romantic or heroic about this pair of lovers. To sacrifice her happiness to the well-being of "Prices" was an idea for which Polly's head had simply no room; and how very wide Franz would have opened his honest eyes at the notion that there might be nobler aims in life than the gain of a good place; or that his proposed fat salary could be considered by any one as robbed from some other fellow.

"Why don't the other fellow play better than me?" Franz would have asked; and, if it had been pointed out to him that very possibly the other fellow might, he would have answered, — providing he could have been first convinced of this, — "But then, you see, he ain't got the backbone!"

That one man should starve in a garret while another enjoyed a fat salary because of the superiority of his vertebral column was a part of the inequality of things which Franz could never have been brought to recognize in the abstract, though in the concrete he would have given his last crust to the "other fellow" without even stopping to divide it.

The world would fare ill without Franz and Polly, who, perhaps, add quite as much to the sum of human happiness as more self-devoted and far-seeing people. Indeed, in case of a clear duty, both can be sufficiently self-sacrificing; and though Franz will never believe the Commune is imminent until it is proclaimed from the Bartholdi statue to the Bay of 'Frisco, yet, if he returns to America in time, he will, when any important questions are to be settled by the ballot, invariably vote on the right side.

They were married — of course, by Mr. Clare — in time to permit Franz's return to take part in a musical festival in B——, and departed together, very happy, though amid some tears from Polly, promising to return in a few years at most.

CHAPTER III.

PANSIES.

It was shortly before the wedding, during the prevalence of a "cool wave," that Mr. Clare gave a "tea-party," as Miss Sally called it. The "tea" consisted of coffee and small cakes, and the party was characterized by Dr. Richards, when he was invited to cast an eye over the list of guests, as likely to result as did the celebrated meeting of the Kilkenny cats. For it included not only Father McClosky, Pastor Schaefer, and the Rector of St. Andrew's, but also a very High Church divine from North Micklegard who had recently got into trouble with his bishop by a too promiscuous use of certain technical phrases, a noted evangelist, and a Temperance lecturer. More than this number the room would not conveniently hold; and it must be admitted that, although they passed the time of day and discussed the recent flood as amicably as was to have been expected from men vowed to the service of humanity, there lurked in the corner of each reverend eye such a "say unto me Shibboleth," that their host congratulated himself more than once upon the mollifying influence of the "cool wave," and glanced appreciatingly at Father McClosky, who, strong in his hold upon the Rock of St. Peter, balanced his rotund person upon the hind-legs of his chair, and told anecdotes worthy of Joe Miller.

At last Mr. Clare, who had been rather grave and silent for some time, rapped slightly upon the table.

"My friends," he said, "when I asked you to meet me here to-night, I mentioned my wish to discuss certain public questions, in a spirit of love and truth, with a number of representative men, who, as individuals, possess great influence over large constituencies. I will now add that these public questions have no reference to any theological dogma, or pious opinion that may be held or advocated by any of us; and, while I therefore am assured of greater unanimity than might otherwise be expected," — here the orator smiled slightly, — "I hope for such diversity of view as may bring the truth most clearly to light."

"Ye're a set of black-hearted Protestants, all of ye," said Father McClosky cheerfully; "but, sure, I've the coffee urn forninst me, and the blacker ye get, the more I'll drink. So drive away, me boys, 'tis not meself will pay the piper."

There was a general smile at this, and after a few references to possible vengeance wreaked by the coffee urn, in the form of dyspepsia, the High-Churchman courteously requested that Mr. Clare would state the questions upon which he desired their views.

"It is the cry of the day," said Mr. Clare, "that Religion has lost her hold on the masses, and, among the educated classes, on *men;* I wish to ask you, gentlemen, for your personal experience upon this matter, if you will be so kind; of course, with the understanding that every word shall be considered by all of us strictly confidential."

"Well, *my* religion is temperance," said the lecturer, "and that hasn't lost its hold on the masses, by a large majority. On the contrary, it is gaining ground every day."

"I was prepared to hear you say so. Now may I ask what is the proportion — approximate, of course — between the number of men and women engaged in temperance work?"

"Why, the women are for us every time, except such unfortunates as are themselves slaves of rum, a larger number than is generally believed, I regret to say, though there is no way of getting at the exact figures. And they are much more difficult to get hold of; in fact, if we look at the relative numbers of male and female drunkards — as near as we can estimate them — the proportion of those reformed will be about five to one. That is, of twenty male drunkards, known and unknown, and the same number of females, in the first case we might hope to reform *all*, in the second only four."

Mr. Clare sighed. "Let us hope," he said, "that a part, at least, of the sixteen, reform as they have sinned, in secret and unknown. And now," he turned to the evangelist, "I suppose there is no doubt that your meetings are well attended?"

"Sometimes a cat could get her whiskers in," replied that personage succinctly; "but there are plenty of backsliders."

"And the proportion of men and women?"

"Well, some say there are — and some say there ain't — several hundred thousand more women in the world than men, so naturally we have more at our meetings, and more women converts, but the proportion don't go beyond what one might expect; and if more of 'em are converted, fewer of 'em backslide," said the Evangelist.

There was a melancholy pause, then Father McClosky said with something of the expression of a dog that expects a beating, —

"I'll speak next, and encourage ye. Phy is it, I don't know, but there's mighty few *men* that comes aither to mass or confession nowadays, though the women are pretty faithful, the Blessed Mother be praised."

"It is true," said the High-Churchman; "the proportion is very discouraging: I have about six times as many female penitents as male."

Father McClosky looked very quizzical just at this point; but, catching a pleading glance from his host, he helped himself to a cup of coffee, and left the floor to the rector of St. Andrew's.

"My church has been very full of late," he said, "and the increase has been chiefly men; the growth would be still more marked, I dare say," he added, smiling, "if the expression of our host's peculiar views were not restrained — muzzled, so to speak — out of deference to my feelings."

He exchanged a glance of affectionate confidence with Ernest Clare, then the latter turned to Pastor Schaefer.

"It rests with you now to speak, Herr Pastor," he said, "though I believe I know what your reply will be."

"My church is full every Sunday," said the pastor proudly, "and the men outnumber the women two to one."

"And, I believe, formerly the proportions were reversed," said Mr. Clare. "Gentlemen, my own experience has been similar to that of the Herr Pastor. When I began my ministry, I preached to congregations of women. This did not impress me as at all in order; for the Revelation of God was a revelation to *men;* the Jewish Church was a church of men, the Bible was written for men, and Christianity was preached to men. Therefore, if it have now lost its hold upon them, it must be either that we men, as men, have undergone a radical change, or that the faith which once moved us is wrongly preached. Of course, an unbeliever would say that the world is outgrowing Christianity; but that women, as more conservative and less enlightened — as a class — than men, cling to it longest. But I am not addressing a party of unbelievers, but of

Christians, therefore we may dismiss that explanation at once."

"But even though a man may not have outgrown his coat, yet if it has been fastened up behind by two or three heretical pins, he may not be able to put it on," said Father McClosky innocently.

"Omitting the word heretical, which bears a different meaning to — perhaps — each of us, your conclusion was mine," said Mr. Clare, smiling. "For I do not think, gentlemen, that human nature or even masculine nature has changed very much in the last eighteen hundred years."

"It hasn't changed materially since the days of Homer," said the High-Churchman. "Love, war, and religion were the keys to it then. Love, competition, and money are the keys to it now."

"That ain't bad," said the evangelist; "you wouldn't mind my using that, would you? I could do more damage with it than you could."

"You are most kind, and I am highly flattered," said the High-Churchman.

"I'm kinder rusty on Homer," said the lecturer, with a grin, "but I don't think human nature has changed much since Jacob's time. He took a deal of money in his, if I remember right, or cattle, which is much the same thing. Yet Jacob was a religious man, too; and the Jews were a religious people."

"Their religion was slightly erratic at times, but no one can deny that they had plenty of it. Well, then, I suppose you all agree that the fault lies not in Christianity, or in the hearers of it, but in the manner of presenting it?"

"But what *is* the fault?" asked the rector of St. Andrew's earnestly.

"The form of religion which is gaining ground with the masses, and which is still the religion of men, is temperance," said Mr. Clare. "Revivalists and evangelists, like our friend here, move the masses powerfully for a time, but, as he tersely expresses it, they backslide. Religious bodies, such as those which the rest of us represent, are *losing* — let us admit the truth that we may amend our mistake — are losing ground with the masses as a whole, and with the men of the educated classes, every day of our lives."

"I fear you are right," said the High-Churchman, sighing, "though missions and street-preaching have done a good deal; but, as you say, they backslide. We can *get* them, but the thing is to *keep* them."

"Exactly. Now, not to speak of the earliest ages of Christianity, religion still had some power when St. Leo saved Rome and the barbarian invaders bowed their heads to receive baptism! And in the Middle Ages" —

"The Ages of Faith!" sighed the High-Churchman.

"The Ages of Superstition and priestcraft," cried the rector of St. Andrew's.

"The Ages when Religion stood in the forefront of the battle for freedom and enlightenment," said Mr. Clare. "Who drained the marshes and made the waste places fruitful? The monks! Who stood as protector between master and slave, oppressor and oppressed? The Church! Who were doctors, lawyers, teachers, musicians, and architects? The clergy, religious and secular. Then, as a result of their own very work, some of these 'professions,' as we still call them, passed into the hands of the laity; that is, those who studied medicine could find facilities for so doing elsewhere than in the cloister."

"And the monks became jealous," said the rector of St. Andrew's.

"Their human nature was the same as ours," was the reply; "besides, they really considered human learning something so dangerous in itself that it ought to be exercised only under the mighty protection of the Church. We must remember that the Cross was stamped upon what we still call a crucible, to protect it from the demons who guarded the secrets of nature, if we would understand the imprisonment of Friar Bacon. The less pious the experimenter, the more dangerous the experiment: and even the most religious trembled for his soul in drawing a pentagon, or setting free those dangerous creatures which we still call geists, ghosts, or *gases*."

"The more fools they," said the Lecturer.

"But, considering the faith of the scientific world now, are ye sure they were entirely wrong?" asked the Father.

"When oxygen and nitrogen produce water, or right doing produces a wrong effect, I shall be sure they were entirely *right*," replied Mr. Clare. "But we wander from our subject. Take the time of the Religious Wars. Had religion lost its power *then* over the masses?"

"The religion of Rome had, over a large part of them," said the Pastor.

"Because the religion of Rome had become a drag on progress, instead of its banner-bearer," said Mr. Clare.

Father McClosky took another cup of coffee. Mr. Clare glanced at him with a slight smile, and took up his subject a little farther on.

"Look at the English Revolution under Cromwell, and the times which immediately succeeded it. Neither religion nor its ministers were powerless to move the masses then."

"But phwat's your conclusion?" asked Father McClosky, with some irritation. "Give us the conclusion, and we can find out the premises ourselves."

"You'll feel better by and by, Bryan," said his friend, laughing, "and in what I have to say now we're all in the same box, except that your church has rather the advantage. I believe, gentlemen, that the reason Religion has lost her hold on the masses is because, though not exactly a drag, she certainly no longer leads the van of progress. Why, it has even become a sort of reproach that such a man introduces politics into his pulpit! As if politics were not to the State what religion is to the individual!"

"Good!" said the temperance lecturer.

"But, my dear friend," said the rector of St. Andrew's gently, "you know we have already agreed that our congregations consist chiefly of women! Now, what would be the practical use of preaching high or low tariff, or free trade, to a set of non-voters? while, as for the men, even if they came to hear us, and considered a parson's opinions worthy of anything more than silent contempt, — why, I really fear that the only effect we should produce would be that of a disgraceful row."

"I should say so!" replied Mr. Clare, laughing; "but, my dear rector, the subjects you suggest belong to a past age of the world. You might as well spend your time in refuting the errors of the Donatists or Sabellians as to preach either tariff — high or low — or free trade. The issues are deeper now."

"I really cannot see it," said the rector.

"No; I fear we have not absorbed all the lessons of the Cannomore disaster," replied Mr. Clare quietly.

"I have been much impressed lately," said the High-Churchman, who had evidently been feeling around in his mind for the key of this enigma, "by the increasing frequency of the allusions in current literature to an imminent social revolution. Is that what you mean?"

"You do well to use the word imminent," returned the other gravely.

"But you would not, surely, have us preach *that!*"

"If we don't, I fear it will preach to us," said Mr. Clare.

"Well, to be sure, we all know your views," said the evangelist, "and I guess most of us suspected what you were driving at; but I've converted too many to be an easy convert myself. You've got to prove it every time."

"Prove what? the reality of the danger?"

"Well, no!" said the lecturer, "I admit the danger now and here. A government that licenses the sale of poison has got to fall, sooner or later, if God Almighty is the Ruler of heaven and earth."

"*Is* He the Ruler of earth?" asked Mr. Clare.

"Well! He rules over a set of awful rebels, I admit," replied the lecturer.

"Then, see here, my friend; while you are blaming the government for failing to exercise a power that it doesn't possess, don't you feel that you waste time? Wouldn't it be wiser and more economical of nervous force to give the power to the government first, and then require its exercise?"

"But how are you going to do it?" asked the lecturer.

"I don't think that is the next question," observed the High-Churchman; "you should ask first, how would government exercise such power if it possessed it?"

"Government can and does, at need, absolutely forbid the sale of liquors in a military camp," said Mr. Clare; "and if the entire Union were one vast camp, garrisoned by an industrial army, working for and paid by government" —

"By George!" said the temperance lecturer.

"Now, to the rest of you," said Mr. Clare, smiling at the lecturer's sudden "satisfaction," "I can present what I wish to say most succinctly, by reading a series of extracts from Lange's 'History of Materialism.' The authority is a good one, and ought to weigh with us the more strongly because the author is — or was — not a nominal Christian."

"But I do not agree with you!" cried the pastor, who had until now been completely silenced by Irish and American loquacity. "I cannot, as a Christian pastor, accept the authority of an infidel" —

"Not even when he agrees with you?" asked Mr. Clare, and began to read before the other could reply.

"'The present state of things has often been compared with that of the ancient world before its dissolution. . . . We have the immoderate growth of riches, we have the proletariat, we have the decay of morals and religion; the present forms of government all have their existence threatened, and the belief in a coming general and mighty revolution is widely spread and deeply rooted.'

"Nor," said Mr. Clare, "need we look for our Goths and Vandals only among the whites. It is my firm belief that only the establishment of a Commune can save us from a race war, the most deadly and terrible the world has ever seen. But to continue: —

"'It is very probable that the energetic, even revolutionary efforts of this century to transform the form of society in favor of the poor and down-trodden masses, are very intimately connected with New-Testament ideas, though the champions of these efforts feel themselves bound in other respects to oppose what is nowadays called Christianity. History affords us a voucher for this idea in the fusion of religious and communistic ideas in the extreme left of the reformation movement of the sixteenth century.'"

"But what did Count Zinzendorff and his dear Moravians know of Communism, unless they learned it from the convents and the Church at large?" asked Father McClosky.

"Or the Book of Acts and the Bible at large," said his friend. "Nevertheless, my dear Bryan, you are quite right. We have had to thank the religious orders for many things already. It is quite probable that the next generation will learn in their school histories that the ideal of Communism, '*Nihil habentes; omnia possidentes,*' was kept alive in the cloister until the world was ready for it. The next extract deserves our very best attention, gentlemen.

"'If it comes to the dissolution of our present civilization, it will hardly be that any existing church, and still less Materialism, will succeed to the inheritance; but from some unsuspected corner will emerge some utter absurdity, like the Book of Mormon, or Spiritualism, with which the justified ideas of the epoch will fuse themselves, to found a new centre of universal thought, to last, perhaps, for thousands of years.'"

"Theosophy?" said the High-Churchman, laughing, as the reader paused.

"I should be sorry to see theosophy raise the banner of Socialism, I confess," said Mr. Clare. "Flimsy as it is, with its attempts at natural science, it advocates a pure morality, and has already proclaimed the Brotherhood of Man. Let it now come forward as the champion of the poor, and the masses will flock to it."

"But, phy not," asked the priest, "av it is so pure and moral as ye say?"

"It may seem to contradict my own principle, which is to welcome truth, wherever and however it be found," said Mr. Clare; "but I don't deprecate any influence that will make a man moral; I merely deprecate the occupation of the throne by any but the rightful heir. But we shall come to that presently. Let me read you a little more.

"'There is but one means to meet the alternative of this revolution, or of a dim stagnation. . . . *Ideas* and sacrifices may yet save our civilization, and transform the path that leads through desolating revolutions into a path of beneficent reforms. . . . Even to-day, again, a new religious community might, by the power of its ideas and the charm of its social principles, conquer a world by storm. . . . Whether even out of the old confessions such a stream of new life might proceed, or whether conversely a religionless community could kindle a fire of such devouring force, we do not know. One thing, however, is certain. If the New is to come into existence and the Old is to disappear, two great things must combine, — a world-kindling ethical idea, and a social influence which is powerful enough to lift the depressed masses a great step forward. Sober reason, artificial systems, cannot do this. The victory over disintegrating egoism and the deadly chilliness of the heart will only be won by a great Ideal, which appears amongst the wondering peoples as a "stranger from another world," and by demanding the impossible unhinges the reality!

"'Often already has an epoch of materialism been but the stillness before the storm, which was to burst forth from unknown gulfs, and give a new shape to the world. . . . The social question stirs all Europe, a question on whose wide domain all the revolutionary elements of science, of religion, and of politics seem to have found the battle-ground for a great and decisive contest. Whether this battle remains a bloodless conflict of minds, or whether, like an earthquake, it throws down the ruins of a past epoch with thunder into the dust, and buries millions beneath the wreck, certain it is that the new epoch will not conquer unless it be under the banner of a great idea, which sweeps away egoism, and sets human perfection in human fellowship as a new aim, in place of restless toil, which looks only to personal gain.'

"That banner of a great idea," said Mr. Clare, "should it not bear the figure of the seventh angel, the sounding of whose trumpet was followed by great voices in heaven, saying 'The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever!' Gentlemen, do you ask a stronger lever whereby to move the masses?"

There was a pause, then the High-Churchman said slowly, "You are an enthusiast, Mr. Clare, and enthusiasm is an exceedingly valuable quality when used on the right side. But, though, of course, you are not conscious of it, you talk very like a demagogue. One would wish, and we of the clergy give our lives, that all should be brought into the fold; but not for the sake of the loaves and fishes."

"Does sheep ate fish?" asked Father McClosky with a look of inquiring innocence; but Mr. Clare frowned him into silence, and answered quickly, —

"The crying defect — perhaps I should say the worst heresy — of our day is, that it divides Christ. He is, we are told, perfect man and perfect God; but in practice we clergy, and Christians generally, represent Him as God only, leaving the beauty of His manhood, the religion of humanity, to those who deny His Godhead."

"I don't think I quite understand you," said the High-Churchman.

"If you find a family starving," said Mr. Clare, "you, as a man, relieve them to the extent of your last penny, and call upon your congregation to help. It is true that you do this because He says, 'Inasmuch as ye do it unto these, ye do it unto me;' but if the poor people themselves ask, 'Why does God let us suffer when there is so much wealth in the world, and He is Almighty?' you reply, 'My dear friends, we must not dispute God's decrees. He makes some men rich and others poor, and He doth all things well. But He feeds all with the bread of heaven who call upon Him, and when you come to that land where we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, He shall wipe away all tears from off all faces.' "

The High-Churchman laughed good-humoredly. "In that connection it sounds very like a satire, or would, to the starving family," he said. "But it is sound doctrine for all that, Mr. Clare."

"It has saved the world for nearly nineteen centuries," said Mr. Clare. "Yet the inevitable deduction of the starving family would be, either that God understood nothing of human needs and desires, or that, however good His meaning and intentions, His power was limited."

"But things of earth are as dust to Him," said the rector of St. Andrew's. "It is the things of heaven that are permanent and real. What will be to us a little more or less hunger or sorrow or cold or nakedness, when we awake up satisfied, after His likeness?"

Mr. Clare regarded the speaker with a glance of reverent tenderness. "Most true," he said gently, "and therefore you never give to any temporal needs?"

"You've got him there," said the evangelist. "Well, I see what you mean, Mr. Clare, but I *don't* see what you are going to do about it. Now, I, for one, don't think Socialism a practicable thing; I may wish it was, but I think it ain't; so do you expect me to preach a kingdom that I don't believe would run two months?"

"People said that our present form of government was impracticable," replied Mr. Clare, "and there were many prophecies as to the length of time it would last."

"Prophecies which you want to fulfil?"

"By no means. Sudden and sweeping changes are exactly what I deprecate; but when a form of government has once taken root, I don't see any objection to its bearing leaf, flower, and fruit. I hope we shall always have a

United States and a President thereof; though I might wish for a few more amendments to the Constitution."

"All right," said the evangelist. "Which am I to preach about first?"

"Whichever you most strongly believe to be right and just. For instance, take the trusts and syndicates; do you believe they are pleasing to your King and mine?"

"Well, you know, trusts — why, you can't have progress without the freedom of the individual; and the freedom of the individual sometimes leads to some other individual being robbed and murdered."

"That's all the answer I want," said Mr. Clare, laughing. "Well, then, our railroads and telegraph lines, — are they managed as they would be by a company of angels?"

"There are angels and *angels*," said the evangelist.

"Are the profits arising from manufactures, etc., equitably divided between labor and capital?"

"That depends on your notion of equity, and who does the dividing."

"Then it seems to me," said Mr. Clare, "that you have a very fair collection of subjects for sermons on hand, in all of which our Lord Jesus, both as a man and as King of the whole earth, takes a deep and practical interest."

"*But*," said the High-Churchman, "*I* might preach such things, Mr. Clare, for I have no wife and children dependent on me; and, as for our friends here," — he indicated the evangelist and the lecturer, — "the multitudes would flock to hear them. But there is many a poor preacher would starve if he acted as you would have him; for, remember, the laity hold the purse-strings."

"Let him starve, then, in God's name," said Mr. Clare passionately; "have we not just heard how the things of earth are as dust beside the things of heaven? And if the first kingdom has its martyrs, shall not also the second? But I do not believe," he went on more quietly, "that such a course, whatever loss or want it might entail, whatever sacrifices of one's own personal likings and idiosyncrasies, would involve absolute starvation. The money is not *all* in the pockets of the capitalists as yet, and a man who lost one pulpit would find another, poorer, perhaps, but more powerful. Besides, what I want — the only thing of real use — is not a sermon here or there, but a general advance all along the line; a proclamation by the divines of every shade of opinion that God Almighty takes an interest in politics."

"It would be an evangelical alliance worth having," said the High-Churchman.

"It would be a power," said Mr. Clare.

"The clerical vote, if it were solid, would be worth buying up," said the lecturer. And the evangelist added, "But what steps would you take to organize your new alliance, and what would you call it?"

"Oh! don't accuse me of trying to found a party," said Mr. Clare. "I have no idea of the kind, I assure you; neither party nor partisans. *My* party is 'all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;' my emblem is the Cross; and the counter-sign, 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'"

"I'm glad you don't want to wave the red flag," said the lecturer; "the old Stars and Stripes are good enough for me."

"Long may they wave," said Mr. Clare. "No. I don't feel drawn towards the red flag; it is too distinctive, and would be a beacon rather than a standard to most people. If I were to change my colors at all," he went on, smiling, "though I hope never to do so, I should adopt these."

He took up a china flower-pot, very prettily decorated by Annie Rolf's own hand, wherein were growing large, richly colored purple and gold pansies.

"The gold of love and the purple of self-devotion — of martyrdom at need," he said.

> "'The language of flowers I know not,
> But pansies speak to me
> Of hope for earth-born toilers,
> In *time* and eternity.'

Gentlemen, will you wear my heart's-ease?"

The words were simple, but the tone was full of meaning. Instinctively all felt that the climax of the evening had been reached, the closing word been spoken; and each one, silently accepting a blossom and exchanging a cordial pressure with the hand that bestowed it, with only a murmured "Good-night," left the room. Not the least cordial pressure was that which came from the hand of Pastor Schaefer.

CHAPTER IV.

VÆ VICTIS.

TWELVE months have passed since the "tea-party," during which time, it is to be feared, Mr. Clare has had cause to think more than once how the pikes and eels preferred the old way. And yet he wears by no means a discouraged expression as he walks with his constant companion, Louis Metzerott, through the early August twilight, towards Dr. Richards's house. Something has been accomplished during this year, however little. Pastor Schaefer sometimes holds consultation with him, though usually not as the taker of what counsel is produced thereat; the rector of St. Andrew's, though he is "not to be expected to turn Socialist at his time of life," is slowly learning that God is the King of earth as well as of heaven; and that, whatever blessing or needed lesson may come by means of suffering, happiness is that which is most consonant with the divine nature. The temperance lecturer has taken to denouncing the weakness of the present civil authorities in the license question rather as a misfortune than a fault; and the evangelist launches satire and invective against the greed of money, and the evils of "practical politics:" all which are steps in the right direction.

"But ye'll never do it, Ernest, me boy," Father McClosky had said shortly after the "tea-party;" "ye'll never get any of the sects nor Holy Church naythe for your 'general advance all along the line.' Av there was nothing else to prevent it, I'll tell ye phwat would, — vested interests. Think of the churches, schools, convents, hospitals, and all them things; would we ever let them fall into the hands of heretics?"

"The question is, whether you can help it," said Mr. Clare. "I see the force of your remark, Bryan; but don't you think the churches" —

"Oh! be aisy wid ye! There's only *one!*"

"The religious bodies, then," said Mr. Clare, "which is a much less convenient phrase, and strongly sepulchral in flavor. Don't you think they would be not only inconsistent, but blind to their own interests, to be influenced by a consideration of that kind?"

"People generally is — the both of them."

"In such cases as the present, yes. For — for whom does your Church hold in trust, all the property she possesses?"

"For the poor," said Father McClosky.

"And, in case of the nationalization of property, to whom would she surrender it?"

"To heretics and infidels, me boy."

"Ah! and with *that* razor will she cut her own throat. The present state of things, Bryan, *cannot last:* that, remember, is the strongest point in my argument; *a* revolution must come. It depends on the — religious bodies — what sort of a revolution it shall be. And, whereas, in the case of their opposing or even hanging back, they might find themselves exceedingly uncomfortable under the new *régime*, don't you see that if Christianity were regarded as the friend and ally of Socialism (I don't say the nursing mother, which is, however, true), there would be no difficulty at all in treating ecclesiastical property as belonging to the nation, but used, rent-free, for public purposes, like stores, art-galleries, museums, etc.?"

"I see; and if the Church could see, it would be all very well; but that day will never dawn, Ernest."

"I confess that I have more hope of Protestantism," said Mr. Clare; "and yet the Roman Church as a whole is in herself a magnificent Commune. She understands human nature better than any Protestant body; and her missionaries and religious orders have always steadily upheld the true worth of manual labor."

"Aha! I expected that! Some one said of you the other day, ye spalpeen, that ye dignified your trade."

"Did you say that I hoped my trade might dignify me? It is quite true, Bryan; there's nothing like working with one's hands to keep the body in health and the soul at peace. I wish every clergyman and brain-worker in the country had some handicraft to work at for an hour or two every day; though not in the present condition of the labor market," he hastened to add, with a smile.

"Well, as between labor and capital, I'm afraid most of the clergy would choose capital," said Father McClosky with a grin.

The rector of St. Andrew's also had his private protest to make.

"I've read that book of Bellamy's, my dear Clare," he said, "and, while I admit that his Utopia would be an ideal state of affairs, I see two reasons why it can never be realized. In the first place, if earth were so delightful a place, man — the average man — would never long for heaven. Of course, religious people might; but I mean, as I say, the average man."

"'And so shall we ever be with the Lord!'" quoted Ernest Clare. "That is the true sweetness of heaven, rector, and no earthly happiness can lessen it. As for your average man, — well, in the first place the average of those days will be considerably higher than the present, you know; and in the second I fancy we shall all need to rise far above any average that is ever likely to prevail, before we get to heaven at all."

"That is very true," said the rector. "But don't you think that a Commune would tend to reduce all alike to a uniform dead level of the commonplace ?"

"Does military discipline, when it is strict and thoroughgoing, ever produce a dead level of commonplace ?" asked Mr. Clare. "It is true that the soldier on duty must be a mere machine; but he is an intelligent, self-acting machine. Hs obeys, but it is not blind obedience; for he knows at least the general aim, though not, perhaps, the particular object sought to be gained, and has his own opinion as to the means employed. At Balaklava, you remember, —

> "'the soldier knew
> Some one had blundered.'

Indeed, I do not believe military discipline is at all possible, except with highly developed individualities, which is one reason that a Communal form of government has never been possible until now. Then, too, the constant effort of the soldier is to distinguish himself by rising above the common level."

"To distinguish *himself*, to surpass *others!* Are they good motives, Clare ?"

"To surpass others in diligence and devotion to the common weal ?" said Mr. Clare. "It is a motive that is never found unmixed, rector, either with love of one's self or love of one's fellows; in the last case I should not call it a bad motive."

"But in the first ?" said the rector.

"Well, ambition in a good cause is better than ambition in a bad one, of which we have so much nowadays. I should call it a motive which would be likely to purify itself as it went along, or else come to signal grief, as in the case of Judas."

"Ah! you take *that* view of Judas's character!" cried the rector, whereupon the discussion glided into another channel.

But on the August evening when we again meet Mr. Clare, his thoughts are busy with a state of things far from ideal. The "little game" which Mr. Dare had been "up to" two years ago, and in which Mr. Randolph had succeeded in "taking a hand," had been partially operative in producing what is called a glut in the market, of certain articles considered by modern civilization necessaries of life. This glut did by no means signify that every one in the world had as much as he or she could use of such necessaries; but only that, an artificial scarcity of certain other actual necessities having been produced, with a consequent rise in price, much coin of the commonwealth had been diverted into the pockets of the capitalists who had produced the "corner," while the commonalty had just so much less; and, if they purchased one article, were forced to go without another. Thus came what is known as "overproduction," a euphemism which one might suppose owed its origin to the capitalists themselves, if these polished, genial personages were capable of so veiling from themselves and the world the misery of which they are the cause. After all, those who perish from want and suffering in these days do not greatly outnumber the victims that have been offered to many a hero's love of conquest; yet how many conquerors have been almost or actually deified by adoring soldiery! And as these heroes seldom fail with kind words, crosses of the Legion of Honor, cigars, and such like, to reward the devotion of their followers, so the modern money-king seldom refuses a subscription to aid those who have suffered in his cause. There is a superb magnificence about this new and civilized game of war, this winning and losing millions by a stroke of the pen, which renders it overwhelmingly worth the candle, at least in the opinion of the players; and while its barbaric splendor fascinates the intellect and deadens certain of the moral qualities, it also leaves others ample room to flourish and develop, thus producing a deformed but not ignoble character. But moral deformity is not only far removed from the stature of the perfect man in Christ, but inevitably tends to perpetuate itself, to the permanent and growing deterioration of the race; and those who arraign God Almighty because of the sufferings of the poor must consider that only by these very sufferings can this frustration of the very object of man's creation be prevented, and the eyes of rich and poor alike be opened to the enormity of the crime committed.

Upon the August evening to which we return again, the unusual clearness of the air, which, from a Micklegard point of view, was decidedly a melancholy beauty, seemed at first sight to have no sort of connection whatever with Mr. Randolph's trip to Paris and "Dare's little game." Yet one result of the financial crisis referred to had been that many of the factories in Micklegard, including Randolph's Mill, had found themselves overstocked with goods, and, after intervals of "shutting down" for a month at a time, had decided themselves unable, consistently with the fall of prices caused by "overproduction," to run their mills on the old terms. But, capital having caused the crisis, it was quite right and logical — from a military point of view, and according to a certain Latin proverb — that the losses should be borne by Labor; and Randolph's Mill set the example of offering the "hands" (which unfortunately had mouths also appertaining unto them) lower wages.

Why should we go further into detail? Are not the terrible, sickening, godless minutiæ of a "strike" known to every one? There were knots of desperate-looking men always talking, talking at the corners of the streets; or, worse, leaning against the walls, with folded arms, lowering brows, and darkly gleaming eyes. Those who were fortunate enough worked at cleaning the streets, as porters, or at any odd job that fell in their way; sometimes a whole family were dependent upon the earnings of some daughter out at service, or son employed as cash or errand boy in a store.

"Oh! they get help from the unions," said a wealthy mill-owner one day to Ernest Clare; "some of them live better than they ever did in their lives."

"They don't look it," replied Mr. Clare quietly.

"No, because they are such discontented dogs; they absolutely enjoy lounging on the street corner, and looking sulky. It helps the effect."

"An unemployed dog," replied Mr. Clare, "when he is also discontented, is very apt to be a dangerous dog. I hope the mill-owners may not find to their cost that it would have been cheaper in the end to run their mills on Gospel principles."

At which view of the case the mill-owner was amused to an extreme.

"There comes Tina Kellar, Tina Schaefer that was," said Louis, as he and Mr. Clare came to the turn which led to North Micklegard.

"How slowly and wearily she walks," returned his companion. "I suppose her husband is still away?"

"Yes, but she had a letter from him yesterday. He says the West is the place after all. He has taken up a land claim out there, and, as soon as he gets his house built and things cleared up a little, will leave his partner in possession, and come home after his wife and family."

"I hope they may do well," said Mr. Clare thoughtfully, "but Tina seems scarcely strong enough for that wild life. How old is her baby?"

"About six months, I think. No, she is not strong, but the life can scarcely be harder than her present one. Since her husband left, she has been going out washing or house-cleaning whenever she can get a job. You know that they are living in our old house, and my father actually shook his fist at her last rent-day."

"She was ready, then?"

"Ready with every cent; but he told her to keep it towards an outfit and travelling expenses. I don't know what they live on, I'm sure; for they never get regular meals at 'Prices' now; only bread and sometimes a dish of potatoes. Dora, the eldest girl, who was named after my mother, keeps house and takes care of the little ones. Tina is so proud she won't take help, except that she lets me pay for the baby's milk. They have named her Louise, after me," said Louis proudly.

"Yes, I heard you were to be godfather," replied Mr. Clare, smiling cheerfully as the subject of this conversation approached. "Good-evening, Frau Christina; when am I to have the pleasure of christening that young lady of yours? or is your father to do it?"

"Ah! I haven't heart or time to think of christenings, Mr. Clare," replied Tina in a low, weary voice; "it's all a mistake for poor folks to have children, and they might as well die unchristened as not."

"But they aren't going to die, I hope," said the clergyman cheerfully; "Louis says you are all going West to grow up with the country. Come, I won't keep you standing when you are tired out with your day's work; but you'll let me give a little treat to the children, I'm sure," as he pressed something into her hand.

"It's very good of you, Mr. Clare, but we ain't beggars," said Tina proudly, even while her hand closed involuntarily over the gift.

"We are all beggars in the sight of God," said Mr. Clare, "and you know Who took little children into His arms and blessed them. I am quite sure He would like *yours* to have a treat. Good-night; God bless you."

"Stop a bit, Mr. Clare; I want to tell Louis where I've been working to-day. Do you know, Louis, that Pinkie Randolph has come home?"

"I knew she was expected, but not quite so soon," said Louis steadily, though his cheek glowed.

"Well, she's home, and I've got the job of cleaning house for her. Much she knows about it! though she wouldn't have it done till she was at home to 'superintend,' as she called it. I will say, though, that she's a kind-hearted girl; told me this morning I looked tired, and gave the cook orders to make me a cup of tea for my dinner. She's at Dr. Richards's now, I guess."

"I'm glad she thought of you," said Louis gently.

"I ain't got much cause to complain," said Tina resignedly. She had not thanked Mr. Clare, but neither of them remembered it as she moved away with her slow, weary step, looking, with her careworn face and thin, bent form, twenty years older than her real age.

"You don't care to turn back, do you?" asked Mr. Clare as they walked on.

"I promised to come, and I have no reason to avoid — any one," said Louis with a gentle dignity not unbecoming. He looked much older than twenty-one, for his youth had ripened rapidly; years of thought and care for others had developed his judgment and strengthened his character, and intercourse with such a man as Ernest Clare had opened new worlds to his intellect and conscience. Now, as his companion glanced down at him, he wondered whether in her travels the fair Rosalie had met with anything truer, purer, or nobler than the young man's fair face, with the open brow set in golden-brown waves, the steadfast blue eyes, and firm, sweet lips, under the heavy mustache. It was not a sad face, though just now it wore a certain quiet wistfulness; but there was a chiselling about the lips, a resolute gravity upon the white brow, that are not often seen upon the sunny side of thirty.

He was tall and well made, without equalling Mr. Clare's height and magnificent proportions; yet there was nothing even apparently unsuitable about their companionship; and, spite of the difference in age, Louis knew himself to be in all Micklegard his leader's chosen friend; more companionable than Fritz, more sympathetic than even Father McClosky.

Virginia Dare, with Frank Randolph in close attendance, was sitting at the parlor window, and recognized them as they approached.

"*Grand Dieu!*" she exclaimed, for she was now much given to French ejaculations, — "*Grand Dieu! voilà*, our friend the shoemaker and that handsome carpenter-clergyman. What a figure the man has! Just look at his shoulders and arms! *mais c'est une taille de prince!*"

"Don't be silly, Virgie," advised Pinkie rather sardonically; "it's no good getting up an enthusiasm for that man; he's a star decidedly out of your sphere."

"He's a cad," remarked Frank, who was fond of using Anglican words, without considering their applicability to American civilization. "No fellow that wasn't would make such a beastly fool of himself;" but further comment was cut short by the entrance of the persons criticised.

It was with a strange mingling of emotions that Pinkie saw her boy lover enter the room, and received a greeting kindly but grave, as from one immeasurably her superior. Not that Louis had any such idea; it was, indeed, in search of Pinkie that his eyes had involuntarily wandered, and the touch of her soft little hand gave him a strange thrill; but there was no shade of difference in his greeting to her and to Miss Dare; it was only Mrs. Richards, by whom he sat down, and on whose hand he gently laid his own, who detected any tremor in voice or manner; and Alice looked into his face and sighed heavily.

The conversation soon turned upon financial matters, and Mr. Randolph took occasion to ask, half maliciously, how "Prices" was weathering the present business storm.

"Oh! we shall pull through, I think," said Mr. Clare easily. "You see, there is very little conflict of interests among us, so our ship is readily handled; and we are able to shorten sail, and even, in extremity, cast the cargo overboard. But we haven't come to that yet," he added.

"Ah? I rejoice to hear it. And without metaphor" —

"Without metaphor, our shareholders, rich and poor, decided to forego their regular rate of interest on their investments, to enable us to reduce our prices for food, clothes, and lodging; accepting, at the year's end, any dividend the company may be in funds to declare."

"Most praiseworthy," said Henry Randolph with a sneer.

"By no means! it is only taking out of one pocket and putting into another," replied Mr. Clare.

"I see from this morning's paper that a large Socialistic meeting took place last night, where several speeches of a decidedly insurrectionary character were made. I suppose both of you were present?" pursued the millionnaire.

"Neither of us," replied Mr. Clare.

"But one of the speakers was called Metzerott. Your father, perhaps?" to Louis.

"It was my father," replied the young man, in a voice of such pain that Pinkie glanced at him involuntarily; but, at the quick, ardent look of gratitude that flashed into his eyes, she glowed vividly, bent her head for a moment over her work, then, raising it haughtily, sent him another glance of icy disdain.

"I am sorry to hear it," said Mr. Randolph, who had seen nothing of this by-play; "but of course such principles as all of you profess can lead only in one direction. And you'll get into trouble down there at 'Prices,' I warn you as a friend. We are a law-abiding people here in America" —

"And therefore aim to improve the laws," said Mr. Clare so quietly that his remark did not seem an interruption.

"Eh! improve? you'll never improve away the distinction between rich and poor, or the laws that protect property."

"God forbid — *the last,*" said Mr. Clare. "What we aim at is to make property — outside of what we now call personalties — really stable and secure, by making the Nation, and not any private individual, its owner."

"Tut, tut, what nonsense! I beg your pardon, Mr. Clare; but, really, to hear a man of your intellect, in this age of the world" —

"And exactly because it *is* this age of the world," said the clergyman, laughing. "Why, Mr. Randolph, a man of *your* intellect ought to recognize the spirit of the times. Would you have us go back to mediævalism, every man his own sovereign, — barring an act or so of empty homage, — as well as his own postman, policeman, scavenger, and lamplighter?"

"We are civilized rather beyond *that* point, sir; besides, it has nothing to do with the subject in hand."

"Nevertheless, the day will come when 'every man his own bread-winner and property-holder' will be equally a relic of barbarism," said Mr. Clare coolly.

"Not in my time, sir, or yours."

"Why, a certain English magazine I was reading, the other day, was disposed to assign it to the date of the Greek Kalends; but I don't feel so sure about that," said Ernest Clare. "Though it might be correct enough for England providing America had never been discovered. John Bull is a conservative animal; he has been beaten and pulled alternately by the horns and tail until he has learned to say 'A;' and is now fully persuaded that 'A' is the only correct thing to say; and that any one who says 'B' is revolutionary, immoral, and un-English. But Brother Jonathan, once he has learned to say 'A,' is more than half prepared to say 'B,' and will be positively eager about the remainder of the alphabet; so 'the coming of the Coqcigrues' may be nearer than we dream," he ended, smiling.

"May I go in to see Freddy?" asked Louis, turning to Alice.

"He will be glad to see you," she said. "His father is with him now. No, Louis, I fear he is no better. If he would like to see Mr. Clare, you had better leave him. It flusters him to have more than one or two persons in the room."

It was evident that Freddy and the Ark of the Covenant would soon part for this world, though he lay still, propped with pillows, upon its friendly bosom, white and shadowy, only the great brown eyes full of life and gladness. Freddy had had a long attack of lung-fever, from which, though the disease had been broken, he had no strength to rally. For a time he had seemed better, then he began to fade, slowly and painlessly, like a flower; but also with conscious gladness, impossible to a flower. He welcomed his friend with a smile and feeble outstretched hand; but not till Dr. Richards had left them came the whisper, "Have you seen her, Louis? Isn't she pretty?"

"Prettier than ever," said Louis. "Shall I sing to you, old fellow? or will you see Mr. Clare?"

"I want *you*," said Freddy. "I want to tell you that I am glad to have seen her again before I die, and doubly glad to die now that I have seen her."

"Do you — oh, no! Freddy! — you don't love her *too?*"

"I think I should if I wasn't going to die," said Freddy, smiling. "Sing now, old fellow. Sing the 'Land o' the Leal.'"

So Louis sang — though it was a difficult task — song after song, in his sweet tenor voice, until those in the outer room hushed their talk to listen, and Freddy fell fast asleep with the tender notes echoing still in his ear. For it is never "woe" to those who are vanquished by the Cross.

CHAPTER V.

AN EXPERIMENT.

During the next fortnight, Louis and Pinkie met almost every day; for Freddy was sinking fast, and both were assiduous in their attendance upon him. It would seem almost impossible that under such circumstances some of the old childish familiarity should not have revived; but Miss Randolph had profited excellently by her Parisian sojourn. She was perfectly able to be to one of her babyhood's playmates all sisterly tenderness, at the same moment that to the other she was only icy politeness; for she had thoroughly learned that the whole duty of woman is to make a rich marriage.

Louis did not molest her. He met her coldness with grave, kind courtesy, and treated her so exactly as one whom he had had the pleasure of knowing only a short time, that Pinkie's girlish heart was hot within her, and she burned to teach him with whom he had to deal. But at present this was impossible, since they never met without witnesses.

For some months, Dr. Richards's physical condition had been such that there seemed small prospect of his ever again practising his profession, for, though he was able with difficulty to move about the rooms of one floor, he could not walk up or down stairs.

Accordingly he had rented his offices to Edgar Harrison, a calm, determined-looking young man just starting in life as an M.D., who, in addition to the vigorous practice of his profession, displayed quite an astral faculty for being always on hand to intercept Miss Randolph's comings and goings. Pinkie, of course, turned up her nose at him as a struggling physician; yet, as it would not have done to be unkind to the poor fellow, gave him plenty of smiles, accepted his modest tributes of flowers, and half promised to take a drive with him some day, when Freddy should be better.

It was not long before Freddy was quite well. They were all around him at the last, his mother supporting him in her arms, white as he, but terribly composed; Dr. Richards, in a great chair drawn close beside the bed, held one transparent hand as though he could thus retain the pure spirit that was soon to flutter forth — whither? to annihilation? The father's clasp was the clutch of despair.

Louis was close upon the other side of the narrow couch, now and again wiping the cold dews from his friend's forehead. They thought him past speaking; but his eyes were open, watching eagerly, gladly, — what? Louis knew; Louis, who had tried in his babyhood to heal the sick, and in youth had followed the white Form down the wreck-laden river. And it may be that the brightening spirit felt the unspoken sympathy, for slowly the brown eyes and the blue met in a long, loving, comprehending look. It seemed to recall him once more to earth, for the wonderful gaze turned next upon Pinkie, who knelt sobbing at her uncle's feet.

"Don't — cry — Pinkie," he said, gaspingly

"Freddy!"

It was the cry of a strong man in doubt and agony. Freddy looked in his father's face with a smile.

"He will take care of me, father," he said.

The effort of speaking seemed to exhaust the last remains of his feeble powers; for he lay for some moments with closed eyes; then suddenly they flashed open again, he turned his head slightly upon his mother's bosom.

"Kiss me, mamma," he said; and with that kiss upon his lips Freddy fell asleep like a tired child.

It was not, as might have been expected, the mother who seemed to feel most deeply the blow of Freddy's death. It was true that Alice had no time to grieve, she who was now the only bread-winner. Besides, she had a strong reason for controlling her sorrow, in anxiety for her husband, who sat day after day in the great chair in which he had seen his child die, motionless, tearless, silent — as silent as the grave wherein that child was lying.

What were his thoughts, even the wife who loved him so well did not dare to speculate; but that they were such as, if dwelt upon, would unhinge both thought and reason, she felt very little doubt.

"Can *you* say anything to comfort him?" she asked of Ernest Clare. "I cannot; his sorrow is too terrible; and I, who have just escaped the hopelessness of it, do not dare to meddle."

He shook his head sorrowfully. "I will try," he answered; "that is, if he will see me."

Dr. Richards made no difficulty about this. "Let him come," he said; "he's not as bad as some of his cloth."

And, in truth, Mr. Clare made no effort to convince the bereaved father that his grief was the punishment of sin; he did not offer to pray with him, neither did he quote a single text; but, after a cordial hand-clasp, sat down quietly beside him, and began the conversation in a low voice, but a matter-of-course tone.

"I am very sorry I was prevented from being with Freddy at the last."

"It was not your fault," replied the doctor in a hard, cold voice. "The end came suddenly and unexpectedly, and there was no time to send for you. You had been most kind and attentive; and I am glad to have an opportunity to thank you. I suppose Freddy had all the consolations of religion, whatever they may be worth."

"They are worth much to me and to him," said Mr. Clare gently.

The doctor waved his hand impatiently. "I am not up to an argument to-day, Clare," he said.

"No, I suppose not. You must miss our dear boy at every moment!"

"He was my last patient," said the doctor with a ghastly attempt at a smile. "I was physician and nurse too, you know, and now my occupation's gone! I say, Clare, what fools those fellows are who speak of a man's immortality consisting in his children who live after him, or in some work of his that is remembered. Here am I, getting on towards sixty, who have done nothing, and have no children to carry on my name. It's a poor old show for my 'joining the choir invisible,' — eh, Clare?"

"I don't believe you care very much for that," said Mr. Clare.

"No, you are right; not when the pinch comes," said the doctor gloomily.

Mr. Clare was silent; he saw that the man's heart was full to overflowing, and that, if let alone, he would pour it out in his own way. In a moment or two, the cool sarcastic tones began again as if they were arguing the case of any one else in the world but the speaker.

"I suppose you don't believe in euthanasia, Clare?"

"As practised upon one's self, or on some one else?"

"Either, or both."

"Then, no. In the first case, it is cowardice; in the second, murder. But I should think you could believe in it logically enough."

"Logic is a delusion, my friend. Logically, I might have spared my poor boy a lifetime of suffering: but, selfishly, I kept him alive months longer than any one else could have done!"

"And you are proud and glad to have done so!"

"Of course! selfishly. And now, look at me! what good shall I ever be in the world again? Why could I not drop a little hydrocyanic acid on my tongue, and join the majority?"

"Fred," said Alice, — she had been working beside him all the while, but had not joined in the conversation; and now her voice was very tremulous; — "Fred, do you remember your own words to me, when I, believing as you do, declared that I would never outlive, for long, you and our dear boy? Do you remember?"

"Indeed, I don't, my dear. Some nonsense, I suppose."

"You told me to live for others, Fred, and in so doing I should find the secret of life."

"Ah! I hadn't the rheumatism then," said the doctor dryly, "nor had I lost my only son," he added, with a tremor in his voice of which he seemed to feel ashamed, for he went on quickly, "Besides, you miss the point of my arguments, my dear, which is that, in my condition, it is impossible for me to live for others except as a burden upon them."

"It is impossible for any one to live for others," said Ernest Clare quietly; "the only possible thing is to live for One other, Who is Jesus Christ."

"Ah! my wife can follow you there; I cannot," said the doctor. "It would be a different world if one like Jesus Christ had made and governed it."

"The mystery of pain, sorrow, and sin," said Mr. Clare, "I do not wonder that it baffles you; yet one who is a father ought to recognize the chastisements of *his* Father, I think."

"Come, now, Clare, would any father inflict such pain as I" — his voice broke irretrievably.

"If it were to bring you to the joy of knowing Him? to purify you and fit you for endless happiness with Him? I think a Father *would*," said Mr. Clare.

"The mystery of pain, the secret of life!" said the doctor thoughtfully, having by this time regained his composure. "Well, Alice, if you have solved the one and found the other, I can only congratulate you. It was the task we set ourselves to work out together; do *you* remember?"

"And He sent pain and grief to help us," said Alice.

A great light came upon Ernest Clare's face; he sat quite still for a moment, then rose and knelt beside the doctor's chair.

"Our Father!" said the rich full voice; then it paused and was utterly silent. Dr. Richards covered his eyes with his hand, and in that silence there rose before him all the meaning of the words that had been spoken. "Our Father!" He had wished to understand why a merciful God allowed pain to exist, and God had sent pain to teach him. Was not that, indeed, *fatherly?*

Mr. Clare rose from his knees, and left the room without another word, leaving the doctor still sitting with his hand over his eyes.

Religion is a science, and, like all science, empirical. Dr. Richards had made his first theological experiment; and, though the needle had moved ever so slightly upon the dial of the galvanometer, the existence of the current must ever more remain for him an established fact.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FRAGRANCE OF TEA-ROSES.

It was a source of self and mutual congratulation to Frau Anna Rolf and Karl Metzerott, that Louis' grief for Freddy's death seemed to draw him nearer to Annie. When he was not at Dr. Richards's, after work hours, he was quite sure to be taking long walks with her; and it really seemed as if their darling scheme were on the eve of accomplishment.

"As for that little chit of Randolph's, he's quite forgotten her," said Karl Metzerott; "I haven't heard her name out of his mouth since she came home;" which, Karl's own nature might have warned him, is not invariably a token of forgetfulness.

"It goes to my heart to see the boy looking so sad and worn," said Frau Anna; "but my Aenchen will comfort him; and I could not wish her a better husband."

The shoemaker smiled proudly. "There's no fault to be found with Louis," he said, "except that he lets this man Clare lead him about by the nose; and the same may be said of your Fritz, Frau Anna."

"Fritz will fight when the time comes," replied the other, her thin face and wild, dark eyes glowing with repressed enthusiasm. "He is all for peace now, but when the signal is given he will remember that he has a wife and child to defend, and a father's death to avenge."

"He has *more*," murmured George below his breath. No one heard him, and if his heavy features looked a shade more sullen, nobody was sufficiently at leisure to observe it; indeed, as we know, George had never been troubled with overmuch observation. Of a reserved, sullen temperament, too sluggish for mischief, but immovably obstinate if crossed or contradicted, and subject to occasional fits of almost delirious rage, his education had consisted almost solely of that judicious letting alone, a little of which is considered so advantageous. "Let sleeping dogs lie," was the established rule for treating him; yet, even half understood as he was, it should have seemed a dangerous experiment thus to train and drill him into the thought of revenge.

In spite of his apparent slowness of thought, he had in some matters the quick scent of a bloodhound, and knew far more about the story of his brother's marriage than any one imagined. A question or two to Denny the porter, a half-glimpse of a box of trinkets which Fritz was putting up to return to the donor, a look upon Gretchen's face when Frank Randolph's name was casually mentioned, — these were enough, perhaps more than enough, for George; for it is quite certain his suspicions were not, at least, *less* than the truth.

Not a hint of all this crossed his lips. Fritz had married her, and taken the burden of her escapade upon his own shoulders; in which last respect, if he were willing to take her at all after all that had happened, George considered him quite right. In his quiet, sullen way, George would have died for Fritz, whose good-nature had warded off many a collision with the other's sullen temper; while his bright, ready wit had shielded and protected his younger brother from many an attack, and backed him up in many a quarrel. Therefore, George had mentally inscribed upon the cryptogram which, like Madame Lafarge, he was always knitting, the name of Francis Randolph, accompanied with signs denoting vengeance upon him, his house, and his posterity, to the fourth generation and beyond. But for the present he bided his time; Gretchen's name must not be made a subject of gossip.

At the very moment of the conversation above recorded, Louis and Annie were wandering along the river-bank in very lover-like fashion, it must be admitted; for she was leaning on his arm, and looking into his face with soft, attentive eyes; while he was talking earnestly, opening the very depths of his heart, talking as he could only talk to Annie Rolf.

"I don't think I deceive myself about her, Aenchen," he said; "I seem to see all her faults, and yet love her the better for them."

"I cannot quite understand that, Louis," said the girl, smiling; "for me, I could not love without respect; I *must* look up and see, at any rate, few faults, and none that I could despise."

"Then you should love one like Mr. Clare," said Louis; "I don't know any one else who would suit you."

Annie smiled and shook her head, but did not reply further, and Louis went on, —

"What I love in her, I suppose, is my ideal, — what she might be, or, as Mr. Clare would say, what she will be when all that is evil is purged away from her nature. O Annie! how *lovely* she will be then!"

"Yes, indeed," said Annie heartily; though, if her true opinion had been given, it would have been that, when vanity and sauciness should be purged out of Miss Rosalie Randolph, there would be not enough of her left to swear by.

"I often think," pursued Louis, whose natural turn for speculative philosophy had been decidedly fostered by intercourse with Ernest Clare, — "I often think, Aenchen, when people talk about being disappointed and deceived in their friends, that it is not really so. One may be deceived *by* a person one loves, not *in* him. For what gives and attracts love is the real self, independent of all accidents; and, sin being not a part of that self, it follows that when we meet in that happy world the false friend of earth, we shall recognize the self we really loved, and feel that the deceit was in our bad opinion of him, not in our good one."

"That is very beautiful," murmured Annie. And while he was smiling at her in all the pleasure of sympathy and comprehension, and she gazing into his face with eyes that half betrayed her wonder what Louis' real self *could* be, since his present and apparent self was so bright and beautiful, —at this moment there passed them a light, open buggy, wherein sat Edgar Harrison and a small figure in black, whose brown eyes took in the full significance of the sight presented to them.

"Your friend, the handsome young shoemaker, and his sweetheart," said Edgar Harrison. "I suppose they are awfully happy; don't you?"

"Really, I don't know; I can't pretend to understand the feelings of that sort of people," said Miss Randolph haughtily.

Edgar watched her with quiet amusement. He was not at all afraid of Louis as a rival, though admitting that in a higher station of life he might have been dangerous. "Well, they look pretty happy," he said.

Pinkie shrugged her shoulders, a gesture she had learned in Paris, without reply; but her first act, upon reaching her own room, was to throw aside her crape-trimmed hat, and study her own pretty face reflected in the glass, as attentively as if it had been the Rosetta stone or a Babylonian cylinder. Then the red lips curved into a triumphant smile.

"I'll settle him," said Pinkie, with a toss of her head.

The next afternoon was what she herself called "hideously warm;" and therefore her prettiest white dress, a marvel of lace and embroidery, was evidently just the thing to wear. There was not a touch of black about it; and the creamy softness brought out every tint of the rich brunette coloring, and softened the vivacious girlish beauty into something infinitely charming. She fastened a knot of fragrant tea-rosebuds in her belt, and then, taking her wide-brimmed Leghorn hat in her hand, announced to the housekeeper her intention of walking round to take tea with her aunt, Mrs. Richards.

"It is too hot for dinner, and so you may tell papa and Frank when they come home," said Pinkie audaciously; "but you might order a freezer of cream to be sent around to Dr. Richards's; harlequin, mind, chocolate, vanilla, strawberry, and orange ice. Don't forget."

"From Prices'?" asked the housekeeper. "Your papa won't like your being away at dinner, Miss Pinkie."

"Then he can do the other thing," returned the girl carelessly. "'Prices'? no, certainly not. Our own confectioner."

"Because I thought," returned the housekeeper, "as it is late in the afternoon, and every one busy, if you wouldn't mind, as you have to pass our confectioner's door" —

"I *mean* to pass his door," said the girl. "Do you suppose I'm going in? Nasty hot place, smelling of cake and bread!"

"Very well, miss. I'll send John to the drug store to telephone. And oh! Miss Pinkie, that poor woman who has been cleaning the house — Tina Kellar, you know — would like to have more work to do, and there are some of the small rooms that need papering" —

"But she's not a paper-hanger."

"She's as good as one, miss; for she papered her own house from top to bottom, and it's as pretty a job as ever I see. Besides, she wouldn't charge near as much as a regular paper-hanger."

"Humbug!" said Pinkie. "Give her what you'd give a man, if she does the work at all."

"Well, you're a kind-hearted young lady," said the housekeeper, "and I'll do it gladly, miss; though the poor creature is hardly strong enough to do such hard work."

"Then, don't give it to her," said Pinkie; "I don't believe in oppressing people."

"But she must work, you know, miss, to support her children."

"Then, what are you talking about? Give her the work if she wants it, and pay her well. If she's not strong enough, she can let it alone. I hope you see she has good meals whenever she is here!"

"Law, yes, miss; only she's got so little appetite. She don't eat enough for a baby. I believe all that keeps her up, anyhow, is determination. She looks like she could just lie down and die any minute."

"Well, make her some beef-tea," said Pinkie; "that will do her good. It is wrong for people to work beyond their strength, wrong and foolish too. I don't see why they do it."

"No, I suppose you don't, when all the wish you've got is that you had something to wish for," murmured the housekeeper, looking after her; while Pinkie, as she tripped along, thought complacently, "People talk about the difficulty of dealing with the laboring classes; but I don't see any trouble in it at all, if you only know how!"

Arrived at her aunt's, she found the doctor confined to his room by an access of rheumatism, and quite unable to see any one; so Pinkie, in spite of her Parisian toilette, bustled around to help the boy from "Prices" lay the cloth in the parlor, where meals were now usually taken, and made herself so sweet and charming during the *tête-à-tête* tea with her aunt that Alice's sad face brightened perceptibly.

"You're a good little thing, Pinkie," she said tenderly. "I wish I had you always."

"I'll come and stay with you whenever you like," said Pinkie, laying her cheek against her aunt's shoulder; "but now run away to Uncle Fred, dearest; I know he wants you. I'll just sit here and wait till some one comes for me."

"I'm afraid — that is, I think Louis will be in by and by," said Alice. "Let me know when he comes. Unfortunately, Edgar is out of town to-night, or I would call him to talk to you."

"The solemn Edgar! I'm glad he is," replied Pinkie.

Louis was late that night. In reality, he was detained by an extra job at which he worked out of hours, but Pinkie had had ample time to picture to herself another river-side ramble, and to feel genuinely forsaken and miserable, before he entered softly and unannounced.

The white figure in the armchair by the window, dimly visible by the moonlight, he supposed to be Mrs. Richards, and approached gently; but, as he bent to give her his usual kiss of greeting, he sprang back, startled. Pinkie, in tears and alone, arrayed in a vesture, as it seemed, of hoar-frost and moonbeams, with fragrant rosebuds in her bosom, and soft white fingers that clung to his confidingly, as she said, —

"It's nobody but me. Did you expect to find Aunt Alice? She is with Uncle Fred. He is so much worse, and I have been so sad and lonely."

"She *had been.*" Louis' fair cheek flushed deeply; he drew a hard breath between his set teeth. The radiance of the full September moon was all about her, the fragrance of the pale rosebuds filled the air; and it was no haughty money-princess who spoke, but his own Pinkie, whose lips he had kissed, and who had thrown herself, weeping, into his arms. Louis felt that he had need of all his manhood, if he would not be doubly scorned when this changing mood should have passed away.

And yet —

"I suppose you were thinking of Freddy," he said very gently, but coldly; "it is natural you should feel sad."

"I was thinking of myself," said Pinkie honestly enough. "Oh, Louis, just think how lonely I am all day, in that great house, with only the servants to talk to! I wish I were Aunt Alice's daughter! I should like to be poor and work for her."

"No, no, that you certainly would not," replied Louis, smiling in spite of himself.

"But I should," she persisted. "Why not? she is the only creature on earth that cares a straw for me; why should I not work for her?"

"What are you trying to make me say?" asked Louis, very pale, but still smiling; "something that you can laugh at me for afterwards? That is not worthy of you, Pinkie."

"I don't see what right you have to call me that!" cried the girl, springing to her feet in sudden anger at the calm superiority of his tone.

"You seemed, some way, to give me the right," said the young man simply; "but I beg your pardon; I will be more careful. And now I have something to say to you, Miss Randolph. Ever since you returned, your manner to me has been as if I were some presumptuous upstart whom you were obliged to keep in his place. And I want to tell you that I know my place quite well; I am a shoemaker and an employé of 'Prices'; so you may spare yourself any further trouble in the matter."

"But you were *that* when I went away," murmured Pinkie, lifting her eyes to his for just a moment.

He took one step towards her, then checked himself. "That was before you had learned *your* place," he said.

Pinkie's eyes filled with tears; for as yet her love for Louis was the most real part of her character, and when she yielded to it for a moment, as at present, it made her, for the time being, as real as itself.

"My place!" she said, looking at him with the bright drops gemming her lashes; "*my* place? Oh, Louis, what place have I in the world? I am only a trouble to my father: he thinks himself bound to give me what he calls social advantages, but it's an awful nuisance to him; he was much more comfortable when I was at school. Frank certainly doesn't want me or care for me very much. Freddy" — her voice was choked with sobs.

"Yes," said Louis hoarsely, "Freddy loved you, Pinkie."

"But he is dead," cried the girl passionately, "and now you, Louis — you, whom I thought my — my friend, *you* turn against me!"

She crossed her arms upon the back of the tall chair against which she had been leaning, and, bowing her head upon them, sobbed unrestrainedly. Louis came close to her, so close that his breath stirred her hair as he bent over her, but he did not touch her.

"After all," he said, "I believe your best chance for becoming the woman God meant you to be, would be for me to take you in my arms now, this moment, and carry you off where no one could ever find you again."

Pinkie listened with beating heart and thrilling from head to foot, while, amid her tears, a dainty smile stole out to play unseen about her rosy lips. Of course she had not the very slightest intention of allowing him to do anything of the sort, but it was delicious to hear him talk so.

"For I believe you love me, *mein Köslein roth*," continued the voice above her bent head. "I believe you love me; yet I know that you will never marry me. You are not noble enough, yet, to understand the nobility of labor."

"I certainly don't understand the nobility of shoemaking," cried Pinkie, roused to defend herself; "though, of course, it's a very necessary trade, and one that some people must always follow; but why should *you* be one of them, Louis?" She laid her hand on his arm and looked beseechingly into his face. "It makes one's hands black, and the leather smells so horribly," she urged.

Louis turned away abruptly; he had not foreseen this turn of affairs.

"And you could be *any* thing, you know," continued the temptress. "A doctor, for instance; *that's* a noble profession, if you like, Louis; and even if you didn't get very rich it wouldn't matter, because," — she blushed and hung her head.

Louis regarded her steadfastly, though his face was bloodless, and his eyes as sad as death.

"What would be the good?" he said gently. "If you will not marry the shoemaker, dear, you could never bring yourself to marry the shoemaker's son."

"I — I — don't know," said the girl softly.

He laid one hand — it was very cold — gently on hers. "I do," he said. "I know you, darling, better than you know yourself; even if you were willing, — as you will not be, once this mood has passed — I would not condemn you to a life you are not strong enough to live. Why, the woman who cleans your house, Pinkie, is my friend, the sister-in-law of the man who works beside me, in my father's shop.

Could you welcome her to your house, or visit her in hers? or, rather, *would* you do it?"

"I'll tell you who would, and could, too," said Pinkie, with sparkling eyes. "That Rolf girl you were walking with yesterday."

Louis made no reply. He looked inquiringly at the pretty, angry face, and waited for further information, which was not long in coming.

"I heard you were engaged to her," said Pinkie, "and I think it is a very good thing; both in the same station of life, and all that; no wonder you won't give up 'Prices' while she's there."

"There is only one woman in the world for me, Rosalie," said Louis sternly. "Don't pretend to think anything else." He was worn with resisting temptation, and stunned by this sudden veering about of the wind, and his patience was almost gone. But for his thorough knowledge that a marriage between them was an utter impossibility, he would have caught her in his arms, and kissed her into a knowledge of her own mind, he told himself; but no, her kisses were the unclaimed property of some good man, *he hoped,* or tried to hope; and Louis would rob no one.

Pinkie looked in his face for a moment, then began again to sob broken-heartedly. He tried to leave her, he even walked as far as the door; then, turning, came swiftly back to her side.

"Darling," he said, "will you marry me now? as I am? I will make things as easy for you as I can, trust me for that; you need not live at 'Prices;' I could take care of you even now, and, once these hard times are over, we could be very comfortable. Will you marry me *now,* Pinkie?"

Over the girl's heart swept a swift revulsion of feeling, a sudden recoil from the bare ugliness of the life which

Louis called comfortable. She had not been prepared for this when she set herself "to lure this tassel gentle back again;" this shoemaker who treated her so consistently as his inferior. For a moment, Pinkie felt that she quite hated him.

"Will you, darling?" he said again, and Pinkie raised her head, looked him full in the eyes, and answered, —

"Marry a shoemaker! No, certainly not."

He turned away, he walked steadily to the door and down the stairs; she ran to the window, and watched him down the moonlit street, but he never looked back: and when the last echo of his footsteps had died away, the poor, lonely, spoiled child flung herself face downwards on the floor, and cried in good earnest.

CHAPTER VII.

"THESE, THROUGH THEIR FAITH, RECEIVED NOT THE PROMISE."

MORE than a week had passed, and it was early October. The bare hill-tops stood mournfully against the golden sunset; but in the valleys the woods were bright with maple, oak, and chestnut, and the fields gorgeous with sumach and goldenrod, while the oldest, most crumbling fence boasted such garlands of blackberry and elder as a queen might have envied. Apples in myriads hung from the trees, or were stored away in barrels that could only be numbered by thousands; barn and storehouse over all the land were bursting with the plenteous yield of the generous harvest; and Christina Kellar walked home from her work heartsick and weary.

Weary!

Dear reader, have you ever known real weariness? Not the fatigue after a pleasure party or ball, to recover from which you lie abed or lounge on a sofa, and are coddled by tender hands; but weariness which, as it promises to have no end, seems also to have had no beginning; weariness which lies down with you at night and drags you backward as you rise in the morning; the faint, deadly, terrible weariness of one whose needs and whose work go on, on, on, in a treadmill round, while her strength, day by day, is failing, failing, failing!

God help all those who are weary with such weariness as this.

Christina Kellar was scarcely conscious of the pavement on which she trod. Her head was dizzy, her whole frame a dull steady ache, and the solid ground was like air beneath her feet, while the long, long street, where lamp after lamp twinkled redly to meet her, stretched out to interminable distances, which she did not dare to calculate. Only she permitted herself a faint throb of something like pleasure whenever a street corner was passed; otherwise it took all her strength to make one step after another. Her husband had now been away nearly six months, and what had Tina accomplished beyond the bare keeping together of body and soul! The rent which Karl Metzerott had refused to take had all gone to pay for medicine for little Paul, who had been sickly from his birth; as for outfit or travelling expenses, she had saved nothing towards them; and now she had only the money actually in her pocket to depend on; for Miss Randolph had no more work for her, nor did she know of another job she was at all likely to get.

Dully feeling — scarcely thinking these things and others; and mercifully unable quite to realize that winter drew near, with a plentiful lack of fuel and warm clothing — she reached her own door, behind which there seemed, even to her tired brain, some unusual stir and bustle; while the one poor window was brilliant with firelight to a ruinous extent, that made her heart throb achingly. She must indeed scold Dora for such wastefulness! The evening was barely cool enough for fire to be a luxury; and even when it should become a necessity, their prospect of having it was scanty enough.

At this moment the door was thrown open, and Dora herself appeared on the doorstep. Dora, in her best Sunday frock, which was shabby enough, to be sure; her hair freshly plaited, and her small round face shining with soap and water.

"Here she is!" cried Dora, dancing frantically up and down on the low doorstep, "*hier kommt das Mütterchen!*"

And then came a sudden rush of great legs and small legs; legs in petticoats, kilts, and cut-over trousers; little Paul scrambling after, last of all, while the baby, left alone upon the front-room floor, contributed a wail instead of her personal presence, but all the legs distanced by one pair in gray pantaloons rudely patched upon the knees, the arms belonging whereunto straightway lifted poor weary Tina off her feet, while bearded lips covered her face with kisses.

"My Tina!" cried Paul Kellar wildly; "I have come home for thee and the little ones, with money, too, plenty of it, to carry you all away into the golden West, where there is work for all and money for all, Tina."

It was like a dream to the poor tired soul, the bright smiles and festive appearance of the children, whom Dora had washed and combed into agonized tidiness; the warmth of the cheerful fire, and the plentiful meal which handy little Otto had ordered with such pride from "Prices." She sat as one half asleep, in a great cushioned chair, and heard how her Paul, while his partner kept possession of their "claim," had been herder for a neighboring ranchman, and so had earned money enough to bring his family out. It was strange to feel that all responsibility had been lifted from her shoulders; that she need not struggle so sorely against this deadly weariness, but could safely afford herself a day or two of utter rest. And even the labor of packing and sending off her household goods, and the long journey that must follow seemed bagatelles to Tina. Had not Paul come home? Paul, with his strong arms and loving heart! Paul, who might be passionate now and then, — he took that after his mother, — but who had never let her tire herself with work that he was able to do.

But she could not swallow a morsel of the nice supper they had ready; she was too tired to eat; only she drank a cup of tea, and then leaned back in her great chair, with the baby at her breast, watching them in weary happiness.

"But you can never nurse that great girl, unless you eat," said Paul, in distressed perplexity; "you should feed her, Christina."

"Dora feeds her when I am away," she said, smiling happily, "but I like to give her her supper when I come home. The touch of her soft lips seems to rest me, Paul."

"Only in reality it does nothing of the kind," said Paul, with severe common sense; "it is but another drain upon your strength. She thrives, however; a fine baby, to be sure!"

"And she crawls," said the proud mother; "she crawls already, about the floor; in another month or so she will walk. We have good children, Paul."

"Because they crawl at eight months," laughed the man. "You do not know what you are saying, my Tina, you are so tired. Let us go to bed, and to-morrow" —

"Oh, to-morrow!" said little Dora importantly, "mother must lie abed and rest. I can take care of the children."

Her mother kissed her, but made no reply, and the little house was soon wrapped in silence and darkness.

Paul Kellar, healthy, strong, and just pleasantly tired, lost very little time in falling asleep; but, his training upon the western plains having taught him to sleep lightly, he was awakened towards morning by a little sharp, impatient baby cry. He raised himself on his elbow and looked around. A pale gray light stole in through the one window; his wife lay with her face turned from him, the baby upon her arm, nestling close to her breast. How long a time had passed since she lifted the child from the empty cradle beside them, he could not know; but there was a strange stillness about the pale figure with the long brown hair that struck to his heart with a terror for which he could not account. He leaned over and looked closer at the sunken eyelids, the half-open mouth. He touched her hand; it was very cold.

At the same moment, little Louise, withdrawing her lips from the cold bosom, looked into his face with frightened eyes and a piteous wail of baby hunger.

With a loud cry, Paul Kellar sprang to his feet.

"Christina!" he cried. "*Ach! mein Gott!* Christina, awake, awake!"

But Christina could not answer.

What happened afterwards he could never clearly recollect. That the children came huddling and sobbing down the steep, narrow staircase; that some one fetched Edgar Harrison, and another the Herr Pastor; that kind hands were about that silent form, and tears dropped on the cold, white features, he scarcely noted. Back and forth, back and forth, treading hard and recklessly through the small house, calling to her to awake and speak to him, trying now one remedy, then calling restlessly, impatiently, for another.

"It is of no use," said Edgar Harrison gently; "she has been dead some hours."

"But it is impossible," cried the half-mad husband; "she was well last night, only a little tired."

The young physician shook his head. He was new to such scenes, and there were tears in his eyes. "It is that," he said. "Fatigue kills as many as cholera, I think; over-fatigue and, perhaps, insufficient nourishment."

At this moment there was a cry from those who stood nearer the bed; a sobbing of women, and the pitiful cry of a child. In the haste and confusion, and efforts at recovery, the little Louise had been laid at the foot of the bed on which her mother lay dead; and now, in the pause, she had crawled, unobserved, once more to that mother's side, and, laying her lips to that cold bosom — ah! well may you weep, baby Louise! the mother-heart is still, the mother's breast is cold and empty, the mother love has gone away from you to heaven.

"Is there a God?" cried the pastor, wildly tossing his thin arms upward, "that he lets the sun rise upon such scenes as this!"

"There is a God," said Ernest Clare, "who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up to death, that we might live forevermore. Courage, friend, the day of freedom is at hand; you would not grudge your daughter the glory of helping Him to redeem the world; of filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ?"

"It is for Henry Randolph's daughter that mine has died," said the pastor, but with less violence; "upon the floors and walls of that palace, to which he has no right, which he has robbed from others, she spent her precious life."

"Henry Randolph!" it was like the cry of a wild beast, as Paul Kellar sprang to his feet with clinched hands and red and glaring eyes.

"Henry Randolph! the bloated millionnaire who cuts down his workmen's wages! the gambler with the daily bread of thousands, starving them by hundreds that he may add another cipher to his bank-account! Is *he* the murderer of my wife?"

"Not wittingly, oh, not wittingly!" Ernest Clare knew better than to urge any plea of "employment" and "wages" at such a moment as this. "Not wittingly, Paul, does he injure any man. Therefore, Father," he added, looking upward, "forgive both him and those like unto him. Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do!"

But Paul Kellar had rushed away into the early and peaceful morning; while the pastor, falling upon his knees beside his dead child, cried out, —

"She was my first-born! I called her Christina that she might be like unto Christ; and behold, like Him, she has died, — died for the sins of the world."

Tina Kellar's piteous death was, to the labor-world of Micklegard, the breath which, fanning the clouds of their discontent a hair's-breadth nearer, completed the power of the gathering storm. A martyr! That was their name for her; but a martyr whose death they were bound to avenge? that, to students of Scripture, seemed less fit and natural.

Karl Metzerott was foremost in proclaiming the duty of revenge. In his youth a silent man, and given to much thinking, the years had brought with them a power of rude but vivid eloquence, beneath which his hearers were swayed as the tree-branches bend before the wind.

It was a glorious victory for Karl Metzerott, this triumph of the doctrine of violence; for, though a few faithful ones still clung to Ernest Clare, with the majority his influence was a thing of the past; and Karl rejoiced over his enemy with a mighty joy, careless or unknowing that what these men followed was not "the Emperor," as they had called him, but the anger and lust for blood and vengeance of their own hearts.

Such an assemblage of lowering brows and sullen, brooding eyes as followed Tina Kellar to the grave had never been seen in Micklegard; the men had nothing to do and nowhere to go; they might as well go to the funeral, they said; and two by two, on foot and silently, they walked after the coffin, through the streets where once Frank Randolph had lured away the dead woman's sister (though only *two* of them thought of that), and up the hill to the quiet cemetery where Ernest Clare had taught Ritter Fritz the duties of true knighthood.

There was silence still, while the body was committed to the ground; silence through the dull falling of the first clods and the steady filling-up of the grave; then Paul Kellar cried with a strained, loud, hoarse voice, —

"Men! brothers! I call upon you for vengeance on the murderers of my wife!"

A hoarse murmur of assent, more terrible than words, swept over that sombre crowd; but once again the arms of the pastor were thrown upward, blackly outlined against the brilliant, clear October sky.

"Not for my daughter!" he cried, "no vengeance for her who bears the name of Christ! 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord!'"

The crowd dispersed, silently and sullenly; they were not quite ready yet. There was to be a meeting that night, not, however, at Männerchor Hall; *that* was a victory which even the Emperor had not been able to achieve. This, and the knowledge that Louis, his only son, Louis, to whom he had been both father and mother, that Louis clung to his rival and condemned his father's course, filled Karl Metzerott's tongue with fire. His rugged features glowed, his strong frame trembled, as he pictured the rich man's home, where the cost of one single picture would have been wealth — nay, length of days, to the bowed figure, old beyond her years, whose life slowly ebbed from her, as she toiled through the gorgeous rooms and up and down the wide, richly carpeted stairs.

"We will have revenge, my brothers," he said; "not now, the time is not yet. We must be stronger first, then we will call Henry Randolph to account, then" —

"Then?" cried a wild, shrill voice, as Paul Kellar leaped upon the platform; "then? I say now! What are they doing now in that gorgeous palace? Repenting of the murder they have done? I tell you they are feasting! Feasting while my wife lies yonder on the hillside, while my children are motherless and my home a desert. The son of the murderer is to marry the daughter of another, of Dare, the great grain-operator, who managed that clever corner in wheat which starved thousands! And they are feasting and making merry!" — His words were lost in a hoarse and terrible roar.

"Burn down the mill! Let us teach him what poverty means!"

Then Karl Metzerott, carried away from all power of reason or self-control by the spirit to which he had so long yielded, sprang upon his feet for the last time.

"The mill!" he cried with angry scorn. "Do you think his millions are there? Were you to burn ten mills he would scarcely feel the loss. The house, the house, I say! Burn down his house, with him in it, and teach him what *hell* means."

In silence more deadly than the wildest outcry, the crowd swept down the steps and out into the night, a fit night for such plans as theirs; for the rain fell, not heavily, but in a soft, cold, treacherous drizzle. The sky had hidden her face from them, and there was not a star to be seen. And as they passed along their power grew: homeless waifs crept from the door-ways and market-stalls where they had sheltered, and joined them at the hint of fire; thieves and coiners left their secret labors; burglars stepped into rank, tools in hand; all the scum and slime of the great city left the holes and corners where it had festered, to aid in the work of flame and blood.

The meeting had been held with closed and guarded doors; but, as it ended, one man, light and active as a monkey, slipped through a window, lit upon the wide, projecting cornice of the one below, thence sprang swiftly and caught a rainpipe, by the aid of which he slid to the ground and ran rapidly up an alley into the principal street of Micklegard. Here he paused a moment, as if in doubt, then sprang upon a figure approaching him from the direction of up-town.

"Louis! was ever such luck as meeting you!"

"What is it, Fritz? not"—

Fritz nodded. "That's what's the matter," he said. "Going to burn Randolph and his house together, and teach him what—well!" said Fritz considerately, "never mind that. Now, you see, there are two streets they can take to get there, and a fellow can't tell which they'll choose. I've got the pull on 'em so far, though; and if you'll take the road of the pins, I'll take that of the needles, as the wolf said to Rothkäppchen; and then one or the other will do the business. See?"

Louis nodded, and sped away; but Fritz was surprised to see him turn off at right angles to his proper course. He did not stop to reason about it, however. "Louis is all right; there's nothing mean about him," said Fritz, "and I guess he knows what he means by it, if I don't."

The truth was that Louis had seen Edgar Harrison's buggy standing before a door in this side street, and was quite prepared to run away with it if necessary; but the doctor was just stepping in as he reached it.

"Mr. Randolph's, doctor," said Louis, stepping after him; "and as fast as you can. I'll explain as we go."

Edgar Harrison lost no time in obeying.

Meanwhile, all had not been peace and serenity in the magnificent mansion whither they were bound. The dinner, which to Karl Metzerott and his kind appeared like riotous feasting, was, in the opinion of those immediately concerned, a very quiet affair indeed; for anything like gayety so soon after the death of so near a relative as Freddy Richards would have been dreadfully shocking to the feelings, and obviously improper. But a mere family dinner, in honor of the betrothal of Frank Randolph and the fair Virginia, was quite another thing; and though, of course, all black was too sombre for one so bright and young as Pinkie, nothing could be deeper mourning than her dress of white crape, caught here and there with bunches of lilies of the valley.

Certainly nothing could have been prettier or more "wildly becoming." The pretty, plump throat shone whitely between the folds of lace at the V-shaped neck of the corsage; the round arms were hidden below the elbow only by a fall of the same priceless lace, faint and misty as frost-work on the window-pane. The eyes were bright, the red lips curved into frequent smiles; but Pinkie's lilies were the work of art, not nature. She would not wear natural flowers now; she hated them, she said; and of all flowers she hated most deeply the pale and fragrant tea-rosebuds.

She presided, for the first time, on an occasion of any moment, with a very pretty, childlike dignity, to the intense admiration of Virginia's rich bachelor uncle, who was, as Pinkie knew very well, the matrimonial fish specially designed by kind friends for her daintily barbed hook; but whom she had not the remotest intention of doing more than tease and play with. In all, including a cousin or two on her mother's side, and various representatives of the house of Dare, the party numbered not more than a dozen; so it was, however costly and brilliant the surroundings, decidedly a very quiet affair.

Coffee was on the table, and Henry Randolph held up one of the tiny cups in which it was served, to show the daintiness of the figures inlaid upon it in mother-of-pearl and gold, and studded here and there with infinitesimal jewels.

"Genuine Japanese," he said, "and belonging to a period of art, past at least two hundred years. I bought them from a seafaring friend, and he picked them up — I fancy, they were given to him — somewhere on the islands."

"Perhaps he stole them," observed Pinkie.

"Ah, well! we won't be uncharitable," said her father indulgently; "at all events, *I* paid for them, and roundly too; the fellow knew my fancy for this sort of thing, and took advantage of it."

"Very immoral of him to take advantage of a man's necessities," said the elder Dare quietly.

"Well, you know, sailors are a rough lot; one can't expect very fine feelings from them. At all events, there isn't such a set of cups in the world. They have never been used before, and I don't know when I shall care to use them again."

"Except on a similar auspicious occasion," whispered the bachelor uncle in Pinkie's pretty ear.

She made some audaciously saucy reply without half hearing him; for her eyes were riveted upon her father, who was at the moment reading a telegram which had just been handed him by a servant.

Pinkie saw that he grew white to the lips; then, recovering himself with an effort, "It's all right," he said; "no answer," and tossed off his cup of coffee.

"This tiresome business!" sighed Mrs. Dare; "it never lets one alone, day or night, Mr. Randolph. I'm sure I expect it will kill Mr. Dare some day; I often tell him he'll have nervous prostration if he don't take care."

"You need not fear, my dear madam," returned her host grimly; "Mr. Dare has no nerves to be prostrated. He is entirely safe!"

"Though it might be better for some of us," he added some moments later, "if Dare had been smothered in his cradle."

This remark was made in the library, whither Mr. Randolph had retired for a few moments, and whither he had found means to summon his son Frank.

"That's pretty rough on my prospective father-in-law, governor," said the young man gayly; "where would the fair Virginia have been in that case, eh?"

"You've got to look sharp if you want to marry Virginia Dare," said his father. "I did think a marriage between you two would — but I suppose he thinks it hasn't come to that yet. Read this telegram from Fletcher, will you? There's a couple of millions gone out of my pocket and yours."

"And you think Mr. Dare" —

"I don't think, I know he's at the bottom of it. He's got nerves of iron and a forehead of brass, that fellow! And that's not the worst of it, Frank. This thing giving way lets me in for a number of others; it means simple ruin if it isn't put a stop to."

Frank whistled thoughtfully.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked.

"If these — people weren't in the house, I'd be off on the next train; but it would never do to show my hand like that. There's the midnight express, though; I shall make that, I think; and, in the mean time, I want you to wire Fletcher for me. Take it yourself to the office; and listen that it is sent correctly; for it must be in cipher, and the mistake of a letter would be fatal. I'll make excuses for you in the parlor; what shall I say?"

Frank thought for a moment. "Rumors of a riot downtown," he said then, "and I've gone to look into it. He may swallow *that*."

"It may be," replied his father, "that he and all of us will be obliged to swallow it. But there is no time to be lost."

Frank only stopped to change his evening coat for less conspicuous raiment, then hurried through the garden to a side gate that opened on what was called River Street, on which a telegraph office was situated at no great distance. Hurrying along this at the top of his speed, he suddenly ran full into the arms of a man who was running rapidly in the other direction.

"Oh! it's you, is it?" said Fritz Rolf, who, as the stronger and less taken by surprise, was the first to recover himself; "and just what I might have expected! Running away like a coward, and leaving your father and sister in danger. A pretty fellow you are!"

"I don't know what you mean by danger," replied Frank impatiently; "but I've no time to quarrel just now."

"Some folks have time to quarrel with you, though," said Fritz, restraining him by a grasp of the arm as he would have sped onwards. "Do you know that the mob are out to-night, and mean mischief to you and your family? I am on my way to warn the house now."

Frank hesitated. "I must go on," he said, "it is a matter almost of life and death to send this telegram. Keep on like a good fellow, and give them warning to clear out by the back way, and I'll come back as soon as I can."

"It's almost too late now," said Fritz, as the tramp of many feet was heard approaching; "by George, I believe they've divided, so as to take the house in front and rear. And they won't have much mercy on you, if they know who you are," he added, glancing at the figure before him.

Frank Randolph was physically brave; but a tremor shook him for just a moment, as he glanced right and left for some way of escape. To retreat was, of course, still possible, but Frank had no idea of running away. The task he had undertaken should be performed, and the way to its performance lay before him. The street on which he stood sloped down to the river; there were no cross-streets or blind alleys through which he could make his way.

> " 'Twice thirty thousand foes before,
> No telegraph office behind,' "

he said coolly. "The only thing I see is to swim for it."

Fritz grinned in unwilling admiration. "It's your only chance if the current don't get away with you," he said. "But, I say, you know who I am, and that any other man but me would hold your head under water, till the devil was washed out of you?"

"Any other man, and you included, might have some trouble about that," replied Frank, as he took off his coat, kicked off his shoes, and fastened the precious telegram inside his hat. "However, you ought not to bear malice for an affair in which I had decidedly the worst of it," he added. "Come, you're a fine fellow, and I am heartily sorry I ever interfered with you. Will you shake hands on it?"

It must be confessed that Fritz hesitated before he could clasp the hand held out to him.

"It wasn't *me* that you tried to ruin," he said sullenly. "After all, it would be a good deed to drown you."

"It's a better deed to make me ashamed of myself," said Frank, shaking heartily the reluctant hand, "and perhaps I may drown myself and no thanks to you. Good-by."

"You ain't a coward, at all events," said Fritz, as the white shoulders disappeared beneath the dark stream, "but you've got to be a regular old swimmer from Swimtown to get through to-night."

The tramp of feet was very close at hand now; even through the darkness he could discern an advancing line, which absorbed and deepened the blackness of the starless night, and this line swayed hither, thither, as if in wild mirth, while overhead scattered torches flamed redly in the misty air, and wreaths of black and suffocating smoke eddied here and there before settling in foul and noxious rain upon faces which needed little to add to their hideous, repulsive horror. Then a woman's voice began some wild and obscene melody, which was caught up, with curses and laughter, by hundreds; and Fritz turned and fled through the quiet night before him towards the doomed household.

Meanwhile, Henry Randolph had returned to his guests, just as Louis Metzerott entered the room from the hall. Mr. Randolph was a brave man; courage had come to him, with his sturdy muscles and handsome face, from a long succession of ancestors.

"A riot, is it?" he said; "poor devils, don't they know who will be the real sufferers?" and then he told his lie as neatly as if the hour which might be his last were not even then ringing out from every clock in the city.

"I heard a rumor of this before we left the table," he said, "and have sent Frank to inquire into the truth of it. I hope he won't get into trouble."

The fair Virginia gave a little scream.

"Hadn't we better have the carriage brought round, mamma?" she cried. "You don't think they will attack our house, do you, Mr. Metzerott? Oh! dear me, why should they? I'm sure we never did anything to them!"

"I think the police will be here before they could have time," said Louis. "We telephoned the news of the riot as we came along. Indeed, for all of you to make your way to Mr. Dare's will be much the best plan. I will stay here to meet them; perhaps, when they find no one whom they are angry with, they will not do any harm; or even if a few pictures and things were injured" —

"I shall stay to defend my property," said Henry Randolph, for it would never do, he thought, to miss that midnight train, and Dare's house was three miles out of the city, "but if you will take my daughter with you, Mrs. Dare" —

"I shall stay with my father," said Pinkie.

"You will not talk nonsense, but do as you are told," said Mr. Randolph sharply. Pinkie's red lips closed firmly, but she made no reply.

The carriages — there were three of them — rattled around to the door in a shorter time than they had ever been got ready since they left the builders' hands; the last to start, Mr. Dare's, was to have taken Pinkie, but that young lady was nowhere to be found, nor did she reply to any calling of her name.

"Oh! she must be in one of the other carriages," cried Mrs. Dare, sobbing with terror; "Virgie, my dear, did you not see her drive off with your uncle in the phaeton?"

"I dare say she did; some one was with him; but don't ask me, mamma, for I'm too frightened to see anything."

There was no time to be lost, for the red glow of torches, the noise of singing, and the sound of that terrible tramp, were coming nearer with every second. The coachman slammed the door, and the carriage dashed away too swiftly to fear pursuit by men on foot.

Doors and windows had already been securely fastened, and now, that by which his guests had departed having been secured also, Mr. Randolph turned to re-enter the parlor.

"Now, all we have to do," he said cheerfully to Louis and Edgar Harrison, who had stayed, hoping by his personal influence to do some good, "all we have to do is to —Pinkie!"

For down the great staircase, her eyes and cheeks bright with excitement, came Pinkie. She shivered with cold, and had wrapped a great scarlet opera cloak over the whiteness of her crape. One hand held the ermine collar closely around her throat, the other clung for support to the brazen balustrade; but her smile was as saucy as ever as she said,—

"It's just like a man to want to keep all the fun for himself. I'm not to be fooled that way, daddy, I assure you."

"You are a recklessly disobedient child, Rosalie, and I am severely displeased with you," said her father sternly; "but," as a roar as of wild beasts showed that the house was surrounded, "we must make the best of it now. It is *too late*."

There was utter silence among the little group, for a moment; then a repetition of that savage roar, another, and another, shook the night air.

"I should like to know what they are doing?" said Henry Randolph restlessly. Pinkie, with her face on his shoulder, trembled in every limb. "I hope you are enjoying the fun, my dear," he added, looking down at her.

The roar changed to his own name.

"Randolph! Randolph! come out, come out!"

"You'll never think of such a thing, Mr. Randolph," cried Edgar Harrison. "Let me go instead. I may be able to influence them!"

"*Influence* a mob?" said Henry Randolph, smiling as he placed his daughter in a chair and hastily kissed her brow. "The only hope is to keep them amused until the police can come up. If they only have the sense at headquarters to mount them, it won't be very long."

"Long enough to tear you in pieces, as they are more than ready to do," said Louis.

"Maybe so; but — well, my young friend, I don't pretend to be a saint, or an idealist, either, — I believe that's the new term, — but I never yet have sent any one into danger when I could go myself. Take care of my little girl, both of you. Now, John," to the servant, "be ready to fasten that door behind me. Look sharp now."

"Hold on, John," said Louis quietly. "I shall go with Mr. Randolph. They won't hurt me, and I may be able to help him."

Henry Randolph regarded him sharply. "I fancy you are safe enough," he said; "both of us know very well who is the ring-leader in this thing. No, I sha'n't mention his name, now or afterwards, for your sake."

The young man bent his head silently, he could not answer; then he turned for one last, wistful look at his darling, his pink Rose, as he had loved to call her.

For the first time since their parting in the warm September dusk, their eyes met.

"Louis!" her white arms went out to him with the cry, and with one step he was upon his knees beside her, and they were holding each other so closely, it seemed that death itself would have been powerless to part them.

Another roar, another cry of "Randolph! Randolph!" and Louis rose to his feet.

"I must go, darling," he said; then, with his wistful eyes upon her father, "You will forgive me, sir. I could not help it; I have loved her all my life."

Still holding her lover's hand, Pinkie stood up. "Papa," she said, "I'm going to marry Louis. I don't care if he *is* a shoemaker! I'd marry him if he was a rag-picker."

"Your own education having especially fitted you for the pursuit of rags," said Mr. Randolph. "But I've no time to discuss such folly now. Louis Metzerott, are you coming?"

"I am coming," said Louis. "Don't be frightened, darling; there is no danger for me, and I will take care of your father."

"It is very bright here," he said to Mr. Randolph, as they passed into the hall. "I think I would not let them see more of the house than could be helped. Some of them scarcely know what it is to have a roof over their heads; others are starving" —

"Ah! I see," said Henry Randolph; "turn down the gas, John."

In the new darkness, the lovers kissed each other again, then Louis placed the girl's hand in Edgar Harrison's.

"Take care of her, doctor," he said.

Then the bolts rattled; the key turned; the heavy door swung back on its hinges just far enough to permit them to pass through; then, with a bang and jar, it closed behind them.

Outside, in the red glare and dense smoke of the torches, the mob stood waiting. Most of them knew Henry Randolph by sight, yet such was the darkness that only the sound of his voice made them certain of their prey. As for the slighter, more youthful figure that stood beside him, whose fair hair had shone for an instant in the dim gaslight from the hall, not a man there doubted that Frank Randolph had chosen to share his father's danger; and *one* man felt that his hour of revenge had come. No one could ever guess, on such a night, and from such a throng, the source of a stray bullet; and he was certain of his aim. He had prepared himself for this moment; the weapon in his bosom was as familiar to his hand as the tools of his lawful trade. Fritz would be avenged, and Gretchen's fair fame be all untouched.

"Well, men," said Henry Randolph, "I think I heard my name called; may I ask what I can do for you?"

"Blank your impudence!" returned a rough voice; "you'll soon find out what we want."

"Where's my wife?" cried a thin, shrill voice, "where is Tina Kellar, you" —

"Tina Kellar! I found my daughter shedding tears the other day at the news of her death! Do you blame me if the poor woman was overworked? What was I to do? She was too proud to take anything *but* work, else, I assure you, she should have had money enough and to spare; but she was well paid and well treated!"

"Well paid?" it was Karl Metzerott who replied, "and what right had you to the money you doled out to her? How did you get it? Robber! thief! swindler! we will hang you at your own door, and burn the house down over your head."

Henry Randolph made one step in the direction of the speaker. "Do you think I do not know your voice?" he cried; "but for your son's sake I forbear to call your name. Come on, cowards, thousands of you against one, and he unarmed. Come on, if you dare!"

The crowd swayed back and forth with angry murmurs, but did not advance. Henry Randolph turned quickly to his companion.

"Your turn," he said in a low voice; "I scarcely think they have recognized you yet."

Louis came forward out of the dense shadows that had hitherto protected him, to the front of the pillared veranda. The red light of a torch shone full upon his young, slender figure; never was there a fairer mark for a traitor!

He raised his hand to remove his hat, that his face might be clearly seen; but even as he did so, — a flash — a sharp, deadly ring —

Henry Randolph caught the falling figure in his arms,—shot through the heart.

"Fools! murderers! beasts!" he cried in a voice nor man nor woman who heard it ever forgot, "you have killed the only true man among you! You have shot Louis Metzerott."

Then, with a horrible cry, Karl Metzerott leaped upon the veranda, tearing his son's body from the arms that sustained it, and hurling the sustainer back against a heavy marble vase, which swayed upon its pedestal, then fell sidewise upon Henry Randolph's prostrate form. But, save that terrible cry, no sound came from the father's lips as he pressed his hand upon the red stream that welled from his son's bosom. And over all the throng there fell the silence of awe and horror, until it was broken by a single voice, the voice of the Herr Pastor.

"'Vengeance is mine; *I will repay,*' saith the Lord."

CHAPTER VIII.

"THAT, APART FROM US, THEY SHOULD NOT BE MADE PERFECT."

THERE was no effort made to exact revenge for Louis Metzerott's young life. Long before the police arrived (those at headquarters *not* having had the sense to mount them), his body, still held fast in his father's arms, had been removed to his home; and there laid upon the bed from which only that morning —

Karl Metzerott allowed no hands but his own to touch the body of his son; and, when the blood had been washed from the cold form, it was the father alone who dressed it in the well-kept "Sunday suit," and brushed back the fair hair from the white temples. Then he sat down beside the bed, dumbly despairing. His clothes, of a rough brown cloth, were stiff with patches of dark red, his hands were stained of the same fatal color, his rugged face was set, his eyes dull and glassy.

"Do I need to be told that I cannot keep him long?" he asked bitterly; "then let me keep him while I can; and leave me, all of you, let me be alone with my dead."

For a night, a day, and then another night, without food or sleep, motionless, silent, brooding over thoughts too terrible for words, he sat there.

Forever, forever parted, never, nevermore to meet again. The gentle, strong, loving heart still forever, the blue eyes nevermore to read the secret of another's sorrow, the busy hands folded uselessly on the wounded breast. Ah! that wound had not been useless; it had dispersed the mob more quickly than a hundred cannon.

Once and again, as the light flickered over the still features, he started forward, full of the wild thought that they had moved; — only to fall back the next moment into the blackness of a bitterer despair.

Dead, dead, body and soul, forever, forever, dead, dead!

In the dawn of the second morning there was a hand upon the lock, and the voice of Ernest Clare begged for admittance. With the sense that, of all men, this man he not merely dreaded but feared to see, the shoemaker's spirit rose up bravely to defy this fear. He unbarred the door and stood aside for the guest to enter. He was prepared for grief, it was natural that any one should love his boy; and preaching he was ready to defy; but he had not anticipated the look of sorrowful triumph, as in a dear-bought victory, wherewith the clergyman bent to kiss the pale cold forehead.

"It is the death he would have chosen," he said, turning to the father with almost a smile.

Karl Metzerott's rugged features worked convulsively a moment, then the words burst from his lips as though they rent his heart in the speaking, —

"I chose it for him! I killed him!"

Ernest Clare turned his eyes aside from beholding the man's agony; it was all he could do.

"I hate you," continued the rough voice, harsh with grief; "yet, if I had followed your counsel, my boy would be now alive. The vengeance which I would have brought upon the guilty has lighted on the head of the innocent; yet you would have me believe in a God, who rules and judges the earth!"

"Tell me this," said Ernest Clare, "while a man or woman lives who remembers Louis Metzerott, will there ever be another riot in Micklegard?"

"Another!" cried the father, "another! *Allmächtiger Gott!* ANOTHER!"

"You have called upon His name!" said Ernest Clare, "and you have felt His justice! How dare you deny that He *is.*"

Oh! the white, crushed, helpless, hopeless face that the shoemaker turned upon him.

"Have you no mercy?" he whispered.

And then Ernest Clare came swiftly towards him, and laid his strong hands upon the man's shoulders.

"My brother," he said, and his voice shook with its weight of tenderness, "my brother, God is very merciful; even His vengeance is mercy. He will give you back your son, the boy whom your sin has slain. In his youth you taught him to follow Christ; in his young manhood he followed Him even unto death. Follow Him yourself, and you will find your boy again. There is no death to those who love the Lord."

"No death?" the tone was incredulous, yet it thrilled with a faint hope. "But even if — if all you say were true, it cannot — could not, help this longing, this terrible longing, to hear his voice again — only one word — to see him smile — oh, if he would but stir an eyelid or a finger," cried Metzerott desperately, "it could not be so hard to bear — afterwards."

Ernest Clare's eyes were full of tears. "Do I not know!" he said, "I who have buried father and mother, and kissed the dead lips of the woman I love. Yet even then, when the desire of mine eyes was taken away at a blow, — even then — I felt that in Christ Jesus is neither death nor separation. And now, though I long sore for their smiles, and my heart will hunger for the sound of their dear voices, they are far nearer to me than when they lived on earth; and when I meet them again it will be in the closeness of a union whereof this world hardly dares to dream."

For still a moment the strong, rugged nature held out; but, though blind to the beauty of the sun-ray, and cold to its genial warmth, it yielded to its death-dealing power.

Suddenly turning, he fell upon his knees by the side of his son, with his face upon the wounded bosom.

"Jesus Christ!" he cried, "Jesus Christ!" and broke into bitter sobbing; but when that fit was past he was as gentle as a little child.

George Rolf was never more seen in Micklegard; but after many years Paul Kellar, then a prosperous Western farmer and long since married again, — Paul Kellar wrote of a strange, solitary miner, who had long been one of the mysteries of that wild region, and who, when he had bravely died in defending his "pile" from a gang of horse-thieves, was recognized by Paul himself as George Rolf. From these things many suspected whose hand fired the fatal pistol; but why will always remain a mystery.

"Prices" still flourishes; and Miss Sally, though in a ripe old age, has never laid down the reins of the kitchen department. It is believed that she is training Dora Kellar, who returned to Micklegard upon her father's second marriage, to succeed her.

Henry Randolph would, no doubt, have been able to retrieve his losses but for the illness which followed his almost fatal accident; but, as none but himself had the key to his affairs, he found himself, when he recovered, shorn of his beams, and reduced to what he called and felt to be poverty, though to others it would have been at least a competency. He never again had "nerve" enough for

Wall Street; but went abroad as soon as he was able to travel, and there he still lives — or at least exists. He is always present at any sale of art antiques, and is considered an authority, though he rarely buys; and it is reported that he also frequents such gaming-tables as are still allowed to cumber the earth, where he watches the play with a sort of awful fascination, though without the courage to risk more than a small sum on either red or black.

Pinkie nursed her father devotedly during his illness, but begged piteously not to be taken away from Aunt Alice when Mr. Randolph went abroad. The granting of this petition, Mrs. Richards was afterwards inclined to regret; for in the quiet of the desolate household the poor, lonely child fell into a sort of melancholy, from which she was only roused by a genuine and sensible attachment to Edgar Harrison, whom she soon afterwards married. The two families still form one household, and Pinkie's children are at once the torment and the happiness of Dr. Richards and his wife, who scarcely realize that the names of grandfather and grandmother are mere brevet titles. The doctor's experiments in theology have not been abandoned; but he is not likely in this life to get farther than that hope which, we are told, "maketh not ashamed;" hope, the twin sister of love.

Edgar makes a very good husband. Indeed, when Pinkie with tears tells the children stories of "Uncle Louis," as they are taught to call him, and shows them the fair young face, — Freddy's handiwork, — that hangs, garlanded with ivy, over her mantel-shelf, — Edgar sometimes tells himself that to Pinkie has been granted both the real and the ideal; the saint to reverence and adore, and the husband "for workadays" with whom she is far happier than she would ever have been with Louis; and, though Pinkie is much improved, it is quite possible that Edgar is right.

Frank's marriage was not broken off by his father's fall; for, though Mr. Dare made a demonstration or so in that direction, the fair and high-nosed Virginia showed such an unbroken front that the enemy was forced to retreat. She makes Frank an excellent wife, and they do, as people say, "a great deal of good with their money."

Karl Metzerott and Ernest Clare work and wait for the day of the Lord, hand in hand. The shoemaker has grown very gentle, and is much beloved by children, to whom he tells stories by the hour of Louis and the Christ-child, until the small minds become at times confused, as to which one it was who 'vided the tin soldiers, and invited the Prices to share his dinner of soup. But, as to the filling of the shoes at Christmas, that Karl considers a vain superstition. The fathers and mothers do it, he says, and ought to have the credit of it. He is not yet able to see that, under the old legend, the truth, in its fairest form, lies sweetly hidden; but one day, perhaps, he will see even this.

Among all the children he has two favorites, the boy who was saved from the waves of the river, and Pinkie's eldest son, who is called Louis, and who gazes into his face with blue, serious eyes, as he sits cross-legged upon the floor before the shoemaker's bench. Well, well, Karl has no picture over his mantel-shelf wherewith to compare those eyes. He does not need one, he says.

Mr. Dare is still rich and prosperous.

Annie Rolf has never married.

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